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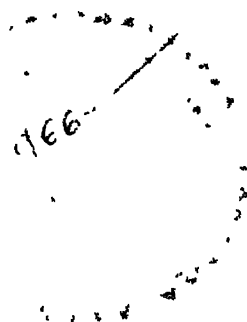
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FICTION

TALES FROM HENRYK SIŁNKIEWICZ
EDITED BY MONICA M. GARDNER

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ, born in 1846 in Poland and educated at Warsaw University. Awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1905. Died in Switzerland in 1916.

TALES FROM
HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ



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INTRODUCTION

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ was born in 1846, and died in 1916. He holds a unique place in his country's literature, inasmuch as he is the one Polish writer whose name, as the author of *Quo Vadis*?, is known all over the world. Although with the passage of time his popularity has somewhat waned in his own country, he still remains the greatest of Polish novelists, and is honoured by his countrymen as one of their chief moral and patriotic leaders during the years of Poland's bondage. The novel was late in making its appearance in the literature of Poland. Before the date of Sienkiewicz it was chiefly represented by his immediate predecessor, Kraszewski, who turned out his novels by the hundred, and who, in spite of the fact that his work has much historical and social value, cannot be regarded as a novelist of the first order. While therefore Sienkiewicz did not create the Polish novel, his genius transformed and developed it, mainly by the medium of the historical fiction that placed him among the great novelists of the world.

Sienkiewicz began his literary career with journalism, with a youthful first novel, and above all with short stories. At the outset his work was influenced by a somewhat soft morbidity, the retreating wave of the preceding generation, and by a tendency to pessimism sufficiently explained by the circumstance that his early manhood was overshadowed by the disaster of the Rising of 1863. As his genius matured, this element yielded to the robust and virile outlook that characterizes his novels. A protracted stay in the United States in his early thirties that opened new vistas of life before him had an enduring effect upon both his psychological and literary development. The greater number of his short stories, although he returned at intervals throughout his life to this form of expression, preceded his novels. His novels are, however, more typical of him than are his short stories, and in them he is seen at his best. The conception of his historical fiction is on a gigantic scale. Like the painter of

some glowing canvas he riots in colour. His pages palpitate with life and movement. They vibrate with the thunder of battle, with the great drama of history and of human life, played out in the wild south-eastern borderlands, in the western plains and marshes of Poland, or as in *Quo Vadis*? amidst the splendour and decay of imperial Rome. With the exception of *Quo Vadis*? and the social novel, *Without Dogma*, Sienkiewicz's novels are loose of construction, and have no strictly defined plot. His canvas is huge: the lives and loves of his characters are staged on a great and dramatic, even cataclysmal, field of history. Yet Sienkiewicz remains always human. His men and women live. If, again with the exception of *Quo Vadis*?, his love stories are on stereotyped lines, and present little subtlety, they are always wholesome and pleasing. In humour, the lack of which is generally speaking the weak point of Polish literature, Sienkiewicz's writings abound: and one figure at least, the immortal Zagloba of the Trilogy, is a masterpiece of comedy. Again, the same writer who can depict war with terrible grandeur, who can retail with pitiless realism the most hideous outbursts of man's ferocity, who paints superbly earth and skies flaming blood red with carnage, can in equal measure dwell with the language of a lover on the sights and sounds of Nature. He can show his moments of exquisite tenderness which in his novels—the short stories are not entirely free from the charge—never degenerate into sentimentality.

Sienkiewicz's work falls roughly speaking into three sections: his historical novels, his novels of contemporary life, and his short stories. His famous Trilogy—*With Fire and Sword*, *The Deluge*, *Wolodyjowski*—was his first historical novel, and that by which he made his name. In *With Fire and Sword* he treats, with all the descriptive power and wealth of colouring that are peculiar to him, of the Cossack uprising of 1648–51 in the south-eastern Polish borderlands. The subject of *The Deluge* is the Swedish conquest of Poland that followed the Cossack war, and the subsequent hurling of the Swedes out of Poland: and if, perhaps by reason of its excessive length, it is not so attractive as the other two parts, yet it contains many very noble scenes. *Wolodyjowski* transports the reader to the Polish frontier outposts that were the bulwark of Europe against Turk and Tartar, and ends with the Turkish and Tartar invasion of Poland at the close of the seventeenth

century, linked with the heroic figure of Sobieski. After writing these books that run to thirteen volumes, with drastic abruptness Sienkiewicz turned for his next novel to the modern life of the Polish manor house. This had been one of the first themes to which he had devoted his pen, two of his earliest short stories, *The Old Serving Man* and *Hania*, being laid in surroundings that perpetuate the well-loved scenes of the writer's youth in his country home. The novel that he now wrote—*Without Dogma*—is an acute piece of psychological analysis, exposing what has been called *l'improductivité slave*, in the form of the diary of a man who has neither will nor faith to save him in a moral conflict. This was followed by another novel of contemporary manners, *The Polaniecki Family*, which, although it lacks the brilliance of its predecessor, is an interesting study of well-contrasted types of character, portrayed with all Sienkiewicz's close sympathy with and comprehension of men and women. The successor of this book was *Quo Vadis*?

Probably no novel has ever won outside the country that gave it birth the popularity of *Quo Vadis*?. It took the world by storm. It has been translated into every European and more than one Oriental language. It was first published in 1896, and since then popular editions of it have continually been brought out in English. In this romance the great Polish novelist's peculiar gifts have their full play: his capacity of reproducing in gorgeous colour the splendid drama of history with an eternal truth & cath it, which he makes the background for the best, the most spiritual, and most significant of his love stories. *Quo Vadis*? marks the highest point of Sienkiewicz's genius. Four years later he wrote one more great historical romance, *The Knight of the Cross*, impregnated with the spirit of the Middle Ages, on Poland's struggle with her perennial enemy, the Teutonic Knights; but the novels that he continued to produce on historical or modern subjects are proof of his declining powers. Yet so great was his versatility that at the age of sixty-five he made a new venture, and wrote a delightful story for children on the adventures of a Polish boy and a little English girl lost in the wilds of Africa, based on his own recollections of a hunting expedition in that country—*Through Desert and Jungle*.

Sienkiewicz's short stories were the first indication of his genius. They have always been very popular in his country.

If we leave aside *Quo Vadis*?—and it may be observed that there is a national undercurrent of meaning even here, and that the heroine Ligia and the Ursus who fills so large a part in the story are Sarmatians—all the novels of this devoted son of Poland are on national themes. But this is not the case with his short stories. It was from Poland, America, and Rome that Sienkiewicz chiefly drew his literary inspiration; and these three factors—Rome in lesser degree—gave his short stories their motives. His most pathetic and most moving delineations of the Polish peasant, a class with whom he deeply sympathized, are to be found in his short tales; his social novels scarcely touch upon the subject. In these peasant sketches of his, written in his earlier manner, it must be owned that he is given to pile on an unnecessary agony, as in the somewhat immature *Charcoal Sketches*, and in *Yanko the Musician*. But in *Bartek the Conqueror*, the best of his peasant studies, Sienkiewicz has succeeded in producing a masterly blending of humour with pathos; the tragedy of the final situation which, when Sienkiewicz wrote the story, was one of poignant actuality in his country, being inevitable, not gratuitous. On the other hand, the scenes of the New World had so deeply impressed themselves upon Sienkiewicz's mind that several of his short stories are built upon what he saw or heard there. He will take a purely farcical episode in an American township that he came across in the States for his *Comedy of Errors*. He will turn to recollections of his own journey across America to California for the trek he has so vividly described in *Across the Prairies*. The sufferings of the Polish emigrants will inspire that tragic sketch, *For Bread*; and the true incident of the Polish lighthouse keeper, the most artistic of his short tales, and one of the pearls of Poland's literature, has for its setting the seas off Panama. Again Rome, her history and her city, profoundly affected Sienkiewicz; and before that fact found its splendid expression in *Quo Vadis*? he tested his capability of writing a tale on the effect of Christ on a Roman mind in the short story, *Let Us Follow Him*.

If, as I have already said, Sienkiewicz's novels are more characteristic of him than his short stories, yet many of the distinctive features of his work may be met with in these latter. His colour and pageantry, his power of giving life to the past ages of history with their restless accompaniments of human

and political passion, naturally cannot be looked for in a short story, albeit he wrote one detached and beautiful episode of Polish border warfare with the Tartars before embarking on the larger theme of the Trilogy. Yet these tales contain much of the Sienkiewicz that we know as a novel writer. We find here the same boundless sympathy with human suffering, the same understanding, playful, tender, tragic, as the case may be, of the nature of men, women, and even of children, whether in its flights of heroism, in its deeper struggles or its little oddities, that distinguish his historical and social novels. The Pole's passionate love of Nature, his handling of atmosphere, that are such marked features of Polish literature, are conspicuous both in Sienkiewicz's novels and tales. It is, moreover, noticeable that in several of the short stories there are strong foreshadowings of a later development in Sienkiewicz's longer fiction. To take but two examples. He will return more than once to something similar to the desert scenes of *Across the Prairies*; and his battle of Gravelotte, which turns the poor bewildered protagonist of *Bartek the Conqueror* into some sort of hero, is the prelude to the clash and roar of the epic warfare of the Trilogy and *The Knights of the Cross*.

Love of his country—of her soul and of her soil—is stamped on Sienkiewicz's work, short tale and novel alike. It must be borne in mind that belonging as Sienkiewicz did to the past epoch of Poland's captivity, a great patriotic and moral purpose underlay his writings. "I wrote these books," so he calls the Trilogy, "with no small labour—for the strengthening of hearts." With their high patriotism, their stern and unflinching condemnation of those elements making for moral disintegration, either of the national or the individual character with, on the other side, their buoyant optimism and invincible vitality, Sienkiewicz's works became a great spiritual force in those dark years of Poland's history when he gave them forth. They won a position for him in his country that led him repeatedly to act as her defender and spokesman before Europe, when abandoned Poland had none other. He died in the midst of what he regarded as the greatest work of his life, that of organizing relief for his nation when she was stricken by famine and her territories were being devastated during the Great War.

MONICA M. GARDNER.

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NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF POLISH NAMES IN THIS BOOK

C=*ts*

Ć, ci, cz = *ch* in cherry

Ch = strongly aspirated *h*

J = *v*

N = a softened *n*

Ó = *oo* in mood

Rz, zi = French *r* as in Jean

Ś, si, sz = *sh*

W = *v*

It has been found impracticable to retain the Polish crossed *l*. It has therefore been replaced by the English *l*, which however, resembles the crossed *l* only in form, the Polish letter being a sound between *u* and *w*.

THE OLD SERVING-MAN

Translated by H. E. KENNEDY and Z. UMIŃSKA

THE old serving man, like the old steward, overseer, and forester, is a type disappearing ever more and more from the face of the earth. I remember that in the days of my childhood one of those mammoths, of whose remains soon nothing but the bones will be dug up by researchers in ancient burial-places, in strata covered thickly with the dust of oblivion, served in my parents' house. His name was Nicholas Suchowolski, and he was of gentle birth, the inhabitants of his native village, Sucha Wola, of which he often spoke in his long talks with us, having been raised of yore to gentle rank. My father inherited him from my late grandfather, whose orderly he had been during the Napoleonic wars. Nicholas himself didn't exactly remember when he entered my grandfather's service, and, when asked about the date, would take a pinch of snuff and reply:

"Well, I was but a beardless youth then, and the Colonel himself, God rest his soul, still went on all fours."

Nicholas performed the most diverse duties in my parents' house. He was butler, he was footman; in summer, acting as steward, he superintended the work in the harvest field, in winter on the threshing floor; he had the keys of the cellar and of the storhouse; he wound up the clocks; but, above all, he grumbled.

I never remember that man otherwise than grumbling. He grumbled at my father, at my mother. I was afraid for my life of him, though I liked him. He squabbled with the cook in the kitchen, he pulled the pantry boys all over the house by their ears. He was never satisfied with anything. When he got tipsy, which happened regularly once a week, every one avoided him. Not that he went so far as to quarrel with the master or mistress, but when he fastened on any one he would follow that person the whole blessed day, croaking and grumbling endlessly. At dinner time he was wont to stand behind my father's chair, and though he didn't himself wait at table, he supervised the lad who did, and embittered his life with most particular zest.

"Keep on looking about you, do!" he would growl, "and I'll pay you out! Just look at him! He can't serve quickly, he drags his legs like an old cow on the march. Just you look about you once more! He doesn't hear the master calling him! Change the mistress's plate! What're you gaping for? See him! Just look at him!"

He was always breaking into the conversation at table, and he was always opposed to every one. It would sometimes happen that my father turned round where he sat and said:

"Nicholas, please tell Matthew after dinner to harness the horses. We're going to drive to such and such a place."

Then Nicholas would say:

"Drive? And why not? Oh dear me, aren't horses for driving with? Let the nags break their legs on a road like that, but if you want to go a-visiting, go! Why, of course, your honours may if you like! Do I object? I don't. Why shouldn't you? And the week-end accounts can wait and the threshing too. Going visiting's more urgent."

Sometimes my father, losing his patience, would exclaim:

"What a bother that Nicholas is!"

And then Nicholas would say:

"Do I say I'm not stupid? I know I'm stupid. The steward's gone to court the priest's housekeeper at Niewodów, and why shou'dn't your honours go a-visiting? Is a visit worse than the priest's housekeeper? What the servant may do the master may do too."

And it continually went on like that, and there was no stopping the old grumbler.

We, that is, I and my younger brother, were, as I said, almost more afraid of him than of our tutor, Father Ludwik, and certainly more than of either of our parents. He was more civil to our sisters. He said 'Miss' to them both, though they were younger than we were, but he addressed us by our Christian names without the least ceremony. For me, however, he had a peculiar charm. He always had percussion caps in his pocket. Sometimes it would happen that after lessons I timidly entered the servants' living-room, smiled as amiably as I could, and said:

"Nicholas! Good morning, Nicholas! Will you be cleaning the guns to-day?"

"What d'you want here, Hen? I'll tie a dishclout to your tail."

And then, mimicking me, he would add:

"Nicholas! Nicholas! When you want a percussion cap Nicholas is good, and if not the wolves may eat him for all you care. You'd better go and learn your lessons. Shooting won't make you wiser."

"I've finished my lessons," I would answer, half crying.

"He's finished his lessons! Oh ho, he's finished them! He learns, so he does, and his head's as empty as an empty knapsack. I won't give you any, and there's an end on't." (So saying, he would be already searching in his pockets.) "And some time or other it'll get into his eyes, and Nicholas'll be blamed 'Whose fault was it?' 'Nicholas's.' 'Who let him shoot?' 'Nicholas.'"

Thus grumbling, he would go to my father's room, take down the pistols, blow down them, asseverate a hundred times more that it was all no good. Then he would light a candle, place the cap in the pan, and let me take aim, and often even then I would have a heavy cross to bear.

"The way he holds that pistol!" he would say. "Like a barber-surgeon his syringe! Fit for nothing you are, but to put out candles when they burn low, like a beggar in church. Better go and be a priest and say 'Hail Marys,' and not be a soldier."

In spite of it all, however, he taught us his old trade of war. Often and often after dinner my brother and I drilled under his eye, and Father Ludwik would march with us, though very comically.

Nicholas would look at him sideways and then, though he feared and respected him most of all, couldn't refrain from saying:

"Why, but your reverence marches just like an old cow!"

I, being the eldest, was the most under his rule, so I suffered the most. Yet old Nick, when I was sent away to school, cried as if the greatest of misfortunes had happened. My parents told me that after I had gone he got crosser than ever, and worried them for a fortnight. "They've gone and sent the child away," he said. "He can die for all they care! Oo! Oo! What good is school to him? Isn't he the heir? He's to learn Latin, is he? They want to make a Solomon of him. What waste! The child's gone, so he bar, and the old man has nothing to do but drag himself from corner to corner, and look for what he didn't lose. It's no good at all, none!"

I remember that when I came home for the holidays the first time, everybody in the house was still asleep. It was only just

about daybreak. The morning was a wintry one, snowy. The stillness was broken by the creaking of the well-sweep on the farm and the barking of dogs. The shutters of the house were shut, only the kitchen windows glowed with a bright light that coloured the snow lying on the bank of earth under the outer kitchen wall pink. I drove up, sad, troubled, with fear in my soul, for my first report was by no means a good one. It was just because until I had settled in, got accustomed to school routine and discipline, I couldn't get on. So I was afraid of my father, I was afraid of the severe, silent bearing of Father Ludwik, who had brought me home from Warsaw. So there was no comfort until, lo and behold, the door of the kitchen opened and old Nicholas, his nose reddened by the cold, came wading through the snow, carrying some little earthenware jugs of steaming cream on a tray.

When he saw me he cried: "Best, dearest young master!" and, putting down the tray in haste, upset both the jugs, caught me round the neck, and began to hug and kiss me. From that time forward he always gave me the title of "young master."

Yet for a fortnight after he couldn't forgive me for the loss of that cream. "There I was quietly carrying the cream," he kept saying, "and he drives up! He chooses just that very moment . . ." and so on.

My father wanted, or at least threatened, to thrash me for the two "middlings" for calligraphy and German which I had brought with me; but on the one hand my tears and promises of reform, and on the other the intervention of my sweet mother and, finally, the row Nicholas made, prevented him. Nicholas didn't know what kind of a thing calligraphy was, and wouldn't even hear of my being punished on account of German.

"What now, is he a Lutheran or a confounded Boche?" said he. "Did the Colonel know German? Or does your honour" (here he turned to my father) "know it? What? When we met the Germans at . . . what's its name? at Leipzig, and the devil knows where else, we didn't speak a word of German to them, only they showed us their backs at once, and there was an end on't."

Old Nicky had one more peculiarity. He seldom talked at length about his former warlike expeditions but, when in special moments of good-humour he did so, he lied like a trooper. He didn't do it with intent to deceive. Perhaps the facts had got mixed up in his old head, and grown to fantastic dimensions.

Whatever he had heard anywhere about warlike adventures in his youth, he applied to himself and my grandfather the Colonel, and he fully believed what he told. Time and again when he was supervising in the barn the peasants who were working off their dues by thrashing grain, and he began to prate, the peasants stopped working and, leaning on their flails, listened gaping to his stories. Then, maybe, he would notice it and yell at them:

"Why are you pointing your mouths at me like guns at a target, eh?"

And again bang whack, bang whack! For a time you would hear the sound of the flails hitting the straw. The old man would be silent for a while, but then he would begin again.

"My son writes to me that he's just been made a General under Queen Palmira. He's doing well there, he says, so he does, getting high pay; only, he says, there are terrific frosts there . . ." and so on.

Here I must tell you that the old man's children hadn't done him credit. He had, indeed, a son, but that son was a great rascal who, when he grew up, got into all kinds of mischief, and finally took himself off and disappeared completely; and his daughter, a lovely girl in her time, had love passages, it appears, with all the upper employes on the estate, and finally, having given birth to a daughter, died. The name of this daughter was Hania. She was the same age as myself, a lovely, delicate girl. Sometimes, I remember, we played at soldiers together. Hania used to be the drummer and the nettles were the enemy. She was good and angelically gentle. A hard fate awaited her, too, in the world, but those are memories which have nothing to do with our present story.

I revert to the old man's tales. I myself heard him tell that once upon a time the cavalrymen's horses ran away at Maryampole in Lithuania, and eighteen thousand of them rushed through the toll-gates into Warsaw. How many people they trampled down, what a day of judgment there was, before they were caught, may be imagined! Another time he related, this time not in the barn, but to us all at the manor, what follows:

"Did I fight well? Why shouldn't I have fought well? Once I remember there was war with the Austrians. I was standing in the ranks, in the ranks, I say, and the Commander-in-Chief himself rode up to me, I mean the Commander-in-Chief of the Austrians, of the enemy, and he said to me: 'Eh, you

Suchowolski, I know you! If we got hold of you,' says he, 'the whole war would be over,' says he."

"And didn't he mention the Colonel?" asked my father.

"Of course he did! Why, I said quite plainly, 'you and the Colonel.'"

Father Ludwik lost his patience and said:

"But look here, Nicholas, you're lying as if you got special pay for it."

The old man looked angry and would have answered sharply, but, as he feared and respected the priest, he was silent, and, after a moment, wishing to smooth things over, he went on:

"Father Sieklucki, the chaplain, said the same to me. Once when an Austrian stuck his bayonet under my twentieth, I mean under my fifth rib, I was in a bad way. 'Ha!' thought I, 'I must die, so I'll confess my sins to God before Father Sieklucki,' and Father Sieklucki listened and listened, and at last he said: 'Fear God, Nicholas!' says he. 'What a tissue of lies you've told!' And I answered: 'Maybe, but I don't remember anything else.'"

"And they cured you, did they?"

"Cured me, indeed, cured me! Why should they have cured me? I cured myself. I took and mixed two charges of powder with a gill of whisky, and swallowed it one night, and got up the next day as sound as a bell."

I should have listened to more of these tales, and written them down for you, had it not been that Father Ludwik, for what reason I know not, forbade Nicholas to, as he put it, "completely infatuate me." Poor Father Ludwik, being a priest, and a quiet dweller in the country, did not, in the first place, know that every youth whom the storm casts from his quiet, retired home on to the broad arena of life must be infatuated time and again; and, in the second, that it isn't old servants and their tales that do it, but persons of quite a different kind.

Moreover, Nicholas's influence upon us couldn't have been harmful for, contrariwise, the old man watched very diligently and severely over us and our conduct. He was a conscientious man in the strictest meaning of the word. He had retained from his soldiering days one very fine virtue, which was just that very conscientiousness and exactitude in the carrying out of orders. I remember that one winter the wolves began to do immense damage on our estate, and grew so bold that at night

several of them, a dozen or more together, would come into the village. My father, himself a famous hunter, wanted to have a hunt; but as he was anxious that our neighbour, Mr. Ustrzycki, a well-known exterminator of wolves, should take command of the battue, he wrote a letter to him, called Nicholas, and said:

"The innkeeper is driving to town. Get in with him, Nicholas, and get out at Ustrzyca, and give the letter to the master there. But be sure to bring me an answer. Be sure you don't come back without an answer."

Nicholas took the letter, got in with the innkeeper, and drove off. The innkeeper came back in the evening, but no Nicholas. My father thought that perhaps he was passing the night at Ustrzyca, and that he would return next day with our neighbour. But a day passed and no Nicholas; a second and a third and no Nicholas. There was lamentation at home. My father, fearing that perhaps the wolves had attacked him on his way back, sent out search parties. They searched but could find no sign of him. A message was sent to Ustrzyca. They said there that he had come, had not found the master at home, had asked where he was, then had borrowed four roubles from a footman and had gone, nobody knew whither. We racked our brains in an effort to guess what it all meant. Next day the messengers who had been sent to other villages came back with the news that they'd found no sign of him anywhere. We had already begun to mourn him, when, lo and behold, on the evening of the sixth day, when my father was just giving orders in his office, he suddenly heard a scraping of feet, a clearing of the throat, and a muttering, by which sounds he immediately recognized that it was Nicholas.

And it was, indeed, Nicholas, frozen to his bones, emaciated, weary, with icicles on his moustaches, almost unrecognizable.

"Good heavens, Nicholas, what have you been doing all that time?"

"What have I been doing? What have I been doing?" grumbles Nicholas. "What should I have been doing? I didn't find the master at Ustrzyca, so I drove to Bzin. At Bzin they told me that I might just as well not have come there, for Mr. Ustrzycki had driven off to Karolówka. I drove there too. He wasn't at Karolówka either. Why should he sit in other folks' corners? Isn't he a gentleman, that needn't go on foot? From Karolówka I walked to the town, for they told me his honour was in the district office. What would he be doing there? Is he

the village mayor? He'd gone to the governor's office. Was I to turn back, or what was I to do? I went to the governor's office, and gave him the letter."

"Well, and did he give you an answer?"

"He did and he didn't. Of course he did, but he laughed at me till you could see his back teeth. 'Your master,' says he, 'asked me to a hunt for Thursday, and you give me his letter on Sunday. The hunt's over by now,' says he, and laughed again. Here's his letter. Why shouldn't he laugh if he wanted to? Isn't he . . ."

"And what did you eat all that time?"

"What does it matter if I didn't eat anything since yesterday? Do I go hungry here? Do they grudge me a bite and sup? If I haven't eaten I'll eat . . ."

Henceforth nobody ever gave Nicholas unqualified orders but, whenever he was sent anywhere, he was always told what he was to do in the event of not finding the person he was sent to at home.)

A few months later Nicholas went to the fair in the neighbouring town to buy farm horses, for he was an excellent judge of a horse. The steward came in the evening to say that Nicholas had come back, that he had bought the horses, but he had come back knocked about, and was ashamed to show himself. My father went to him at once.

"What's the matter with you, Nicholas?"

"I was fighting," he answered, briefly and gruffly.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, old man! Fight at fairs, would you? You have no sense. Old but stupid! Do you know, I'd have dismissed another man for a thing like that? You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You must have got drunk. So you set a bad example to my people instead of showing them a good one?"

My father was really angry, and when he was angry it was no joke. But the strange thing was that Nicholas, who usually on an occasion of the kind didn't forget that he had a tongue in his head, this time remained as dumb as a stone. It was obvious that he had a fit of obstinacy. It was in vain that others asked him what had happened. He only growled at them and wouldn't say a word

But the beating he'd got was no joke. Next day he was so ill that the doctor had to be sent for. It was the doctor who at last cleared the whole matter up. A week before my father had

given a sound beating to the overseer, and he had run away the following day. He had gone to a certain Mr. von Zoll, a German, a great enemy of my father's, and had taken service with him. Mr. Zoll, with our former overseer and his farm hands, driving fattened oxen for sale, had been at the fair. Mr. Zoll had seen Nicholas first, had come up to his cart, and had begun to abuse my father. Nicholas had called him a renegade, and when Mr. Zoll said something more against my father, had replied with his whip. Then the overseer and Zoll's farm-hands had rushed upon the old man, and beat him until he bled.

When my father heard this tale he had tears in his eyes. He couldn't forgive himself for rowing Nicholas, who had kept silence purposely about the whole affair. When he got well my father went and reproached him for this. At first the old fellow wouldn't admit anything, and growled as was his wont, but afterwards he melted, and he and my father wept like children together. My father challenged Zoll to a duel over the affair, a duel which the German long had good cause to remember.

Still, had it not been for the doctor, Nicholas's devotion would never have been disclosed. But Nicholas hated that same doctor for a long time. The cause of his hatred was this: I had a lovely young aunt, my father's sister, who lived with us. I loved her very much, for she was as good as she was beautiful, and I did not think it at all strange that everybody loved her and, amongst others, the doctor, a clever young man, who was very much respected all over the countryside. Nicholas had formerly liked the doctor, had even said of him that he was a man with a head on his shoulders, and that he had a good seat on a horse. But when the doctor began to come to our house with the evident intention of courting Aunt Marynia, Nicholas's feelings towards him changed completely. He began to be polite, but cold towards him, as he would have been towards a complete stranger. Before that he had, time and again, growled at him as well as at others. When sometimes he stayed too long with us, Nicholas, helping him on with his coat and hat, would mutter: "Who ever heard of knocking about at night like that? It's no kind of good. Who ever saw the like?" Now he ceased grumbling, but on the other hand he maintained a dead silence. The good doctor soon saw what was in the wind and, though he smiled kindly as usual at the old man, I should think that inwardly it must have hurt him.

Fortunately, however, for the young Æsculapius, Aunt Marynia had absolutely contrary feelings to those of Nicholas; so it happened one fine evening that, while the moon shone very prettily into the room, while the scent of jasmine came in through the open window from the garden beds, and Aunt Marynia at the piano sang *Io questa notte sogno*, our Doctor Stan came near to her and, in a voice that shook, asked her if she thought he could live without her. Auntie, of course, expressed her doubts as to this, and there followed mutual vows, the calling of the moon to witness, and other things, such as usually happen on occasions of the kind.

Unfortunately Nicholas came in just then, intending to call them to tea. When he saw what was going on he ran at once for my father and, as my father wasn't in the house, for he was going the rounds of the farm buildings, he went to my mother who, with her usual gentle smile, begged him not to meddle with the matter.

Taken aback, Nicholas kept silence, fretting inwardly, for the rest of the evening; but when my father, before going to bed, went to his office to write a few letters, Nicholas followed him and, standing near the door, began to clear his throat and shuffle his feet significantly.

"What d' you want, Nicholas?" asked father.

"Oh, it's just that . . . What was it I wanted to say? Oh, I wanted to ask you, sir, if it's true that our young lady . . . is marrying . . . getting married, I mean."

"Yes, it's true. And what then?"

"It can't be that our young lady is to be married to that . . . that barber-surgeon gentleman."

"What barber-surgeon? Have you gone mad, Nicholas? That Nicholas must stick his bad ha'penny in everywhere!"

"Why, isn't the young lady ours? Isn't she the Colonel's daughter? The Colonel would never have allowed it. Isn't the young lady worthy of a squire, of a gentleman of the best? And, begging your pardon, sir, what's a doctor? The young lady's making a laughing-stock of herself."

"A doctor's a wise man."

"That's as it may be. . . . Haven't I seen a-many doctors? They used to walk about the camp and be in and out of headquarters, but when anything was on, when a battle was coming, they weren't there. Didn't the Colonel call them the little lancet men? So long as a man's well, a doctor won't touch

him, but when he's lying only half alive, it's then he goes for him with a lancet. It's no great feat to cut a man up when he can't defend himself, since he can't hold anything in his fist. Just you try to cut him up when he's sound and can hold a musket! Oh, dear me, it's a mighty deed to poke about among a man's bones with a knife! No good 'll come of it, no good! And wouldn't the Colonel turn in his grave if he knew of it? What sort of a soldier is the man—or squire, for that matter? This can't be! Our young lady won't marry him. It isn't fitting. Who is he, to reach out for our young lady?"

Unfortunately for Nicholas, the doctor not only reached out for the young lady but got her. Six months later the wedding took place, and the Colonel's daughter, amid a flood of tears, shed by relatives and members of the household in general, but particularly by Nicholas, drove off to share the doctor's lot.

Nicholas bore her no malice, for he couldn't. He loved her too much. But he wouldn't pardon the doctor. He scarcely ever mentioned his name, and in general, tried to avoid speaking of him. Here I would interpolate that Aunt Marynia was extremely happy with Doctor Stanislaus. After a year, God gave them a lovely boy, after another year, a girl, and then so on by turns.

Nicholas loved those children as if they were his own, carried them about in his arms, caressed them, kissed them; but still I noticed, time and again, that there remained a kind of bitter feeling in his heart on account of Aunt Marynia's *mésalliance*. Once, I remember, at Christmas, we had sat down to the Christmas Eve supper when suddenly we heard the sound of wheels far off on the frozen track. We always expected a lot of relatives, so my father said:

"Go and see who's coming, Nicholas."

Nicholas went out, and soon came back with a joyful face.

"Miss Marynia's coming," he cried from afar.

"Who?" asked my father, though he knew what Nicholas meant.

"Miss Marynia."

"What Miss Marynia?"

"Our Miss Marynia," rejoined the old man.

And a fine "Miss" Marynia it was that came into the room, with her three children! But the old fellow would, purposely, never call her anything else.

But at last his dislike to Doctor Stanislaus came to an end.

His Hania fell seriously ill of typhoid fever. Those were days of grief for me, too, for Hania was of an age with me, and was my sole playmate, and I loved her almost as a sister. That very Doctor Stanislaus scarcely left her room for three days. The old man, who loved Hania with his whole heart, was like one dazed all through her illness. He neither ate nor slept; he did nothing but sit at the door of her room—nobody but my mother was admitted to the room itself—and he bore in silence his bitter, his grinding grief, that tore his heart in two. He was a man inured to physical labour and to the blows of misfortune, and yet he almost bent under the burden of despair by the bedside of one little girl. . . . Till at last, after many days of mortal fear, Doctor Stanislaus quietly opened the door of the sick room, and, his face beaming with happiness, whispered to those who, in the next room, awaited the verdict, one little word: "Saved!" The old man couldn't restrain himself, he bellowed like a bison, and cast himself down at the doctor's feet, repeating, amid sobs: "My benefactor, my benefactor!"

And Hania did, indeed, recover quickly after that; and, of course, Doctor Stanislaus became the apple of the old man's eye.

"He's got a head on his shoulders," he would repeat, stroking his bushy moustache; "a head on his shoulders! And if it hadn't been for him Hania would . . . There! I won't even say it. . . . Avaunt the omen!"

But a year after that the old man himself began to fail. His strong, erect figure became bent. His hair got very white. He ceased to grumble and to tell lies. Finally, having almost reached his ninetieth year, he became quite childish. He did nothing but make snares for birds, and he kept many birds, especially titmice, in his quarters. For a few days before his death he did not distinguish one person from another, but on the very day itself the flickering lamp of his mind shone brightly yet once more. I remember that my parents were then abroad, for the benefit of my mother's health. One evening I was sitting by the fireside with my younger brother Casimir and the priest, who was also old now. A winter wind and whirling snow beat upon the window-panes. Father Ludwik was praying, and I, with Casimir's help, was attending to the guns in readiness for the morrow, when on the fresh snow the tracks of game would be easy to trace. Suddenly we were brought word that old Nicholas was dying. Father Ludwik betook himself at once to the household chapel for the Sacraments. But I ran

as fast as I could to the old man. He lay on his bed, very pale already, yellow, and almost cold, but tranquil and conscious. Fine indeed was that bald head, adorned by two scars, the head of an old soldier and of an honest man. The light of the blessed candle cast a livid glow on the walls of the room. Nicholas's pet titmice chirped from their corners. The old man pressed with one hand a crucifix to his breast. His other hand was held and covered with kisses by Hania, pale as a lily flower. Father Ludwik entered and the confession began; then the dying man asked for me.

"My master and his dear lady aren't here," he whispered. "So it's hard for me to die. But you're here, young master, dearest, the heir. Care for this orphan. God will reward you. Don't be angry. If I've done any wrong, forgive me. I was cranky, but faithful."

Then suddenly, rousing himself anew, he cried in a stronger voice and in haste, as if his breath failed him:

"Young sir! . . . Young master! . . . my orphan! . . . Lord, into . . . Thy . . . hands . . ."

"I commend the soul of this valiant soldier, faithful servant and righteous man!" concluded Father Ludwik solemnly.

The old man was dead now.

We knelt down and the priest began to read aloud the prayers for the dead.

Twelve years or more have passed since then. The grave of the good old servant in the cemetery is luxuriantly overgrown by the heath that grows there. Sad times came. The storm raged over my blessed, quiet little village. To-day, Father Ludwik is in his grave, Aunt Marynia is in hers. I earn bitter bread by my pen, and Hania . . .

Ah, the tears come!

HANIA

Translated by H. E. KENNEDY and Z. UMIŃSKA

I

WHEN old Nicholas, dying, left Hania to my care and conscience, I was sixteen; while she, scarcely a year younger, was also little more than a child.

I almost forced her away from her dead grandfather's bed, and we both went to our household chapel. Its doors were open; two candles were burning before the old Byzantine picture of the Blessed Virgin, but their light only made the darkness in the recesses of the altar visible. We knelt down side by side. The child, broken with grief, weary with sobbing, sleeplessness, and sorrow, leaned her poor little head on my shoulder, and thus we remained in silence. The hour was late; in the room adjoining the chapel the cuckoo on the old Danzig clock shrilly cuckooed two. A deep silence reigned everywhere, broken only by the distant roar of the snow-laden wind that shook the leaden frames of the little chapel windows, and by Hania's painful sighs. I dared not address a word of comfort to her, I only pressed her to me, like a guardian or elder brother. But I couldn't pray; a thousand impressions, a thousand emotions whirled through my head and heart. Diverse pictures passed before my eyes, but slowly from this confusion there emerged one thought and one feeling, namely, that that pallid little face with closed eyes leaning on my shoulder, that defenceless little being, had now become my beloved sister, for whom I would give my life, and for whose sake I would, if need were, challenge the whole world.

Meanwhile, my younger brother, Casimir, came and knelt behind us, and then Father Ludwik and several members of the household staff. We said the evening prayers, as was our daily custom. Father Ludwik read the prayers aloud, and we repeated them after him, or made, in chorus, the responses in the Litany; and the dark face of Our Lady of Poland, with two sabre-cuts on her cheek, looked down kindly upon us, seemed to share our household cares and griefs, our good and ill fortune,

and to bless all those assembled at her feet.¹ In the course of the prayers, when Father Ludwik began to name the departed, for whom we generally said "May they rest in peace," and added Nicholas's name, Hania again began to sob aloud, and I made in my soul a silent oath that the duties which the dead man had laid upon me I would faithfully fulfil, even should their fulfilment cost me the greatest sacrifices. It was the vow of a young boy, emotionally strung up, who did not yet understand either the possible greatness of the sacrifices or the responsibility, but of a boy not devoid of noble impulses and tender emotions of the soul.

When prayers were over we dispersed to rest. I gave orders to old Wengrowska, the housekeeper, to conduct Hania to the little room which henceforth was to be hers, and not to the women servants' sitting-room, where she had hitherto slept, and to stay with her the whole night; and I myself, having kissed the orphan affectionately, made my way to the annexe in which I, together with Casimir and Father Ludwik, had rooms and which was called in the house "the school quarters." I undressed and got into bed. In spite of my grief for Nicholas, whom I loved sincerely, I felt almost proud and happy in my position as guardian. It elevated me in my own eyes that I, a sixteen-year-old boy, was henceforth to be the prop of one poor, weak being. I felt myself a man. "You shall not be disappointed in me, good old man!" thought I to myself, "in your Master Henryk, in your young squire. You have placed the future of your grandchild in good hands and may sleep quietly in the grave." I really was easy about Hania's future. The thought that in time Hania would grow up, and that she would have to be given in marriage, never entered my head at that time. I thought to myself that she would always stay with me, surrounded by care, like a sister, sad, perhaps, yet tranquil. In accordance with immemorial custom the eldest son got more than five times as much of the property as the younger children, and the younger sons and daughters respected this custom and never opposed it, though there was not a legal entail in the family. I was the eldest son of the family, hence the major part of the property would belong to me in the future; so, though as yet but a schoolboy, I already looked upon it as

¹ The black Byzantine picture of Our Lady of Poland with two cuts on the cheek is venerated at Czenstochowa. Copies of it are to be seen in countless Polish homes.—M. M. G.

mine. My father was one of the largest landed proprietors in the neighbourhood. The fortune of our family did not, it is true, put it in the magnate class, but it had that large affluence characteristic of the old gentry, an affluence that gave daily bread in plenty, and a quiet, family life till death came. So I was to be comparatively rich. Hence I contemplated the future, both my own and Hania's, with tranquillity, knowing that whatever lot awaited her she would always find repose and support near me, should she need it.

Thinking thus, I fell asleep. Next morning I began to put my guardianship into practice. But in what a ridiculous and childish way! And yet to-day, when I remember it, I cannot help being to a certain extent touched.

When Casimir and I came in to breakfast we found Father Ludwik, Madame d'Yves, our governess, and my two little sisters, already sitting at table, the latter, as usual, sitting on high, cane chairs, kicking their little feet and chattering merrily. I took my seat with extraordinary dignity in my father's chair and, casting a dictatorial glance over the table, turned to the lad who was serving and said dryly and imperiously:

"Lay a place for Miss Hania!"

I purposely emphasized the word "Miss."

This had never yet been the custom. Hania usually had her meals in the women servants' sitting-room, for, although my mother wanted her to sit at table with us, old Nicholas never would allow it, repeating: "What good would it do? Let her have due respect for the family. What next?" I was now introducing a new custom. Good Father Ludwik smiled and covered his smile with a pinch of snuff, and a coloured silk pocket-handkerchief. Madame d'Yves made a *moue*, for, in spite of her kindness of heart she, as belonging by birth to the old French gentry, was a great aristocrat; and the serving-lad, Franciszek, opened his mouth wide and looked at me in amazement.

"Lay a place for Miss Hania, do you hear!" I repeated.

"Very good, sir!" replied Franciszek, evidently impressed by the tone in which I spoke to him.

To-day I confess that "sir" himself could scarce restrain the smile of satisfaction which this title, given him for the first time in his life, called to his lips. But his dignity did not permit him to smile. Meanwhile the place was laid in a moment, and Hania came in, dressed in a black frock which the lady's maid

and old Wengrowska had made for her overnight. She was pale, with traces of tears in her eyes, and her two long, golden pigtails fell down over her dress, and ended in ribbons of black crape, plaited in among the strands of hair.

I rose and, running towards her, conducted her to the table. My attentions and all the honour done her seemed only to embarrass, confuse, and tire the child; but I did not understand as yet that in time of sorrow a quiet, lonely, sequestered corner and peace are of more value than the noisy sympathy of friends, even though it may flow from the best of hearts. So I, acting in the best of faith, tormented Hania, thinking that I was fulfilling my task in the most excellent manner. Hania was silent, and only when, from time to time, I asked her what she would eat and drink, she replied:

"Nothing, sir, if you please."

That "sir, if you please," hurt me the more as usually Hania was on more cordial terms with me and called me simply "Mr. Henryk." But the very part which I had taken since the preceding day, and the changed circumstances in which I had placed Hania, made her more timid and humble. Immediately after breakfast I took her aside and said:

"Hania, remember that henceforth you are my sister. Please don't say 'if you please, sir,' to me any more."

"Very well, if you please . . . , Mr. Henryk."

I was in a strange position. I walked up and down the room with her and didn't know what to say to her. I should have liked to comfort her, but in order to do so I should have had to mention Nicholas and his death the day before, which would have made Hania dissolve into tears again, and would only have been a renewal of her sorrow. Finally we sat down, both of us, on a low settee at the far end of the room, the child again leaned her little head on my shoulder, and I began to stroke her golden hair with my hand.

She really did cling to me as to a brother, and perchance that sweet sense of confidence which arose in her heart brought tears to her eyes again. She wept bitterly and I comforted her as well as I could.

"Crying again, little Hania!" said I. "Your grandfather's in heaven, and I will do my best . . ."

I couldn't say any more, for I felt the tears coming.

"Mr. Henryk, can I go to granddad?" she whispered.

I knew that the coffin had been brought, and that they

were just placing Nicholas in it; so I didn't want Hania to go to her grandfather's body until all was ready. But I went myself.

I met Madame d'Yves on the way and asked her to wait for me, as I wanted to talk to her for a moment. Having given final orders as to the funeral and prayed by Nicholas's remains, I returned to the Frenchwoman and, after a few words of preface, asked her if, after some time, when the first weeks of mourning were past, she would give Hania French and music lessons.

"Monsieur Henri," replied Madame d'Yves, obviously annoyed that I was giving orders all round like an old grey goose; "I would be most willing to do so, for I love the girl very much, but I don't know if it is in accordance with your parents' intentions, and I don't know either if they will agree to the position you're arbitrarily trying to give the little girl in your family. *Pas trop de zèle, Monsieur Henri!*"

"She is under my guardianship," I answered loftily, "and I answer for her."

"But I'm not under your guardianship," retorted Madame d'Yves; "so, with your permission, I'll wait until your parents come back."

The Frenchwoman's refractoriness angered me, but luckily things went much better with Father Ludwik. The dear, good priest, who even before had taught Hania, not only agreed to continue and extend her education, but even praised me for my zeal.

"I see," said he, "that you're really setting yourself to perform your task, and although you're young and still a child, I commend you for it; but only remember to be as persevering as you are zealous."

I saw that the priest was pleased with me. The character of master of the house, which I had taken upon myself, amused him rather than annoyed him. The old man saw that there was much of childishness in my pose, but that there were also honest reasons for it, so he was proud and glad that the seed he had sown in my soul had not been sown in vain. Besides that, the old priest loved me very much; and I, who at the beginning, in my absolutely childish years, had feared him with my whole soul, now as I came to adolescence more and more got the upper hand of him. He had a weakness for me, so he let himself be induced to do what I wanted. Besides this, he loved Hania and was glad to better her lot, so far as lay in his power;

so I met with no opposition from him. Madame d'Yves had, at bottom, a kind heart, and also, though a little angered with me, surrounded Hania with tender care. Indeed, the orphan could not complain of a lack of loving hearts around her. Our servants began to treat her differently from before; not like one of themselves, but like a young lady. The will of the eldest son of the family, even though he was a child, was greatly respected among us. My father himself required this. There was a right of appeal to the master himself, and to the mistress, but the will of the eldest son could not be opposed without authorization. He had, too, to be addressed as "Master" from his earliest years. Both the servants and his younger brothers and sisters were accustomed to show respect for him, and that respect continued all through his life. "The family is based on that," my father would declare, and really, as the result of it, the voluntary family agreement, not reinforced by law, by which the eldest son had a larger share of the property than his brothers and sisters, had been maintained for many years. It was a family tradition, passed on from one generation to another. The people got accustomed to look upon me as their future master, and even old, dead Nicholas, who had unlimited privileges, and who only was allowed to call me by my Christian name alone, could not altogether escape its influence.

My mother kept a medicine-chest in the house, and herself visited the sick. When cholera raged she spent whole nights, together with the doctor, in the peasants' huts, risking death, and my father, who trembled for her, did not, in spite of that, forbid it, repeating: "Duty! Duty!" My father himself, too, although he was severe, lent a helping hand to those in need: he often remitted dues of work and, in spite of his hot temper, forgave transgressions easily. He sometimes paid the peasants' debts, bore the expense of their wedding festivities, stood godfather for their children. He bade us respect the people, and, when the older farmers saluted him, doffed his cap to them; nay, he often even called upon them to counsel him. On the other hand, it must be owned that the peasants were greatly attached to the whole family, of which attachment they later on frequently gave clear proof.

I write all this, first of all, in order to give a faithful picture of how things were among us; and secondly, to show how it was that I did not meet with great difficulties in making Hania

a young lady. I met with the greatest, albeit passive resistance from her herself, for she was too timid a child, brought up, moreover, by Nicholas to have an exaggerated respect for the family, to be easily reconciled to her lot.

II

NICHOLAS'S funeral took place three days after his death. Our neighbours drove over in considerable numbers to be present at it, wishing to do honour to the old man's memory, for he had been, though a servant, generally liked and respected. He was buried in our family tomb, and his coffin was placed near that of my grandfather, the Colonel. All through the funeral ceremonies, I never left Hania for a moment. She drove with me in the sleigh and I wanted her to return with me, but Father Ludwik bade me go and invite the neighbours to come from the cemetery to our house, to warm themselves and have something to eat. Hania, meantime, was taken charge of by my comrade and friend, Mirza Dawidowicz, the son of Mirza Dawidowicz, a landed proprietor and my father's neighbour, a Tartar by descent and a Mahometan; but his family had been settled among us from time immemorial, and had long owned property, and been recognized as belonging to the landed gentry of the district. I had to drive with the Ustrzyckis, and Hania got into another sleigh, with Madame d'Yves and young Dawidowicz. I saw the good fellow wrapping his own fur coat about her, then he took the reins from the driver, shouted to the horses, and they were off like the wind. When they reached the house, Hania went to weep in her grandfather's room, and I couldn't hasten after her, for, together with Father Ludwik, I had to entertain our guests.

Finally, every one drove away, and only Mirza Dawidowicz remained. He was to spend the remainder of the Christmas holidays with us, to study a little with me, for we were both in the seventh class, and were to go in for matriculation; but, more than this, we were to ride, to shoot at a target with pistols, to fence and to hunt, which occupations we much preferred to translating the *Annals* of Tacitus and Xenophon's *Cyropædia*. This Mirza was a merry fellow, a regular young rascal and a great practical joker, as fiery as a spark, but most lovable. Everybody at home liked him very much except my father, whom it angered that the young

Tartar shot and fenced better than I did. On the other hand, Madame d'Yves adored him, for he chattered French like a Parisian, never stopped talking, gossiped, joked, and amused the Frenchwoman better than any of us.

Father Ludwik, again, had a slight hope that he might convert him to the Catholic religion, and the more so as the boy sometimes made fun of Mahomet, and would surely have been glad to renounce the Koran, had it not been that he was afraid of his father who, on account of his family traditions, held on to Mahometanism stubbornly, repeating that, as an old country gentleman, he preferred being an old Mahometan to being a new Catholic. Except for that, old Dawidowicz had no Turkish or Tartar leanings. His ancestors had been settled in our parts since the time of Prince Witold. They belonged, like our family, to the very well-to-do landed gentry, settled in one place from time immemorial. The estate they owned had been given by John Sobieski himself to Mirza Dawidowicz, colonel of light cavalry, who had done miracles at Vienna, and this Mirza's portrait still hung on the wall at Chorzele. I remember that this portrait made a strange impression upon me. Colonel Mirza was a terrible fellow. His face was so scored by Heaven knows what sabres that it looked as if it were written over with mysterious letters out of the Koran. He had a tawny complexion, projecting cheek-bones, slanting eyes, with a strangely sombre light in them. Those eyes had the peculiarity that they always looked at one out of the portrait whether one stood straight in front of it or on either side. But my comrade Selim was in no way like his ancestor. His mother, whom his father had married in the Crimea, had not been a Tartar woman, but had hailed from the Caucasus. I did not remember her, but I know people said she was of surpassing beauty, and that young Selim was as like her as one drop of water is to another.

Oh, he was a beautiful boy, that Selim! His eyes were almost imperceptibly slanting. They were not Tartar eyes, but great, black, mournful, melancholy eyes, such as are characteristic of the Circassians. They were eyes of such inexpressible loveliness when they were tranquil, as I never saw in another, and never will see again. When Selim begged for anything, and looked at one with those eyes, it seemed as if he got one's very heart into his grasp. He had noble, regular features, that looked as if a sculptor had chiselled them, his complexion was swarthy, but fine, his mouth a little full and red like a raspberry, his

smile sweet and his teeth like pearls. But when Selim fought, for instance, with a schoolfellow, which happened often enough, that sweetness of his disappeared like a deceptive chimera; he became almost terrible; his eyes seemed to get more slanting, and they shone like those of wolves; the veins stood out on his temples: his skin darkened, and the real Tartar, such as those our fathers tried conclusions with, awakened in him. That, however, lasted but a brief while. After a moment Selim would weep, kiss and beg pardon, and he was usually forgiven. He had the best of hearts, and a great tendency to noble impulses. Yet he was careless, a little frivolous, and an unrestrained reveller. He rode, shot, and fenced in a masterly fashion; he studied but moderately well, for, in spite of his great abilities, he was rather idle. We loved each other like brothers, frequently fought, as frequently were reconciled, and remained firm friends. In the long vacation and at all holiday times either he spent half his time with us or I at Chorzele. And so now, having come for Nicholas's funeral, he was to remain with us until the end of the Christmas holidays.

Well, when our guests drove off after dinner it was perhaps four in the afternoon. The short winter day was drawing to its close. The great red glow of sunset shone into the room where we sat. Crows began to hop about, flapping their wings, and to caw, on the snow-covered trees, bathed in the sunset light, which stood near the windows. A whole flock of these birds could be seen flying above the pond from the forest, and swimming, as it were, in the evening light. In the drawing-room, to which we had come after dinner, silence reigned. Madame d'Yves had gone to her room as usual to tell fortunes from her cards, Father Ludwik was walking up and down the big room with measured steps, taking snuff. My two little sisters were gambling under the table on the carpet and, butting their little heads against each other, tangled their golden, curly hair together; while Hania, I, and Selim, sitting on the sofa by the window, looked out at the pond from the garden side, at the forest beyond the pond, and at the fading light of day.

Very soon it was quite dark. Father Ludwik went away to say his prayers; one of my little sisters chased the other into the adjacent room. We remained alone. Selim had begun to chatter and babble something or other, when Hania suddenly moved nearer to me and whispered:

"Mr. Henryk, I'm afraid; terrified."

"Don't be afraid, little Hania," I replied, drawing her to me. "Cuddle close to me, yes, like that. While you're with me no harm can happen to you. Look, I'm afraid of nothing, and I'll always be able to defend you."

It was a lie, for, whether it was because of the darkness that filled the big room, or because of Hania's words and Nicholas's recent death, I, too, was under an odd impression.

"Perhaps you'd like a light to be brought?"

"Very well, Mr. Henryk."

"Mirza, tell Franek to bring in the light."

Mirza jumped off the sofa, and soon we heard, on the other side of the door, an unusual trampling and noise. The door burst open noisily, and Franek rushed in like a blast of wind with Mirza behind him, holding him by the shoulders. Franek had a startled, frightened look on his face, for Mirza, holding him by the shoulders, twirled him round and round like a top, and turned round with him himself. Then, conducting him in this wise up to the sofa, he stopped and said:

"The master bids you bring a light, since Miss Hania's afraid. Would you rather bring the light or have me wring your neck?"

Franek went to get the lamp, and came back with it in a moment; but it appeared that the light dazzled Hania's eyes, that were red with weeping, so Mirza put it out. We were again plunged into mysterious darkness, and again silence reigned between us. Now the moon shed its clear, silvery light through the window. Hania was obviously afraid, for she cuddled yet closer to me, and I had to hold her hand also; Mirza sat opposite us on a chair and, as was his wont, began to muse and, after a while, to get rather dreamy. A great silence was about us. We felt a bit eerie, but comfortable.

"Mirza, tell us some fairy-tale," said I. "He can tell them beautifully. Would you like that, Hania?"

"Yes," answered the girl.

Mirza looked upwards and thought for a moment. The moon lit up his handsome profile. After a moment he began to tell a story in his sweet, low, thrilling voice.

"Far away, beyond the forests and the mountains, there lived a certain good fairy named Lala. Once upon a time a Sultan named Haroun came to her hut. He was very rich, having a coral palace with diamond pillars, and a roof of pearl. The palace was so large that it took a year to walk from one end to the other. The Sultan himself wore real stars in his turban.

The turban was made of sunbeams and, on the top of it, was the moon's horn, which a certain magician had cut off and presented to the Sultan. This Sultan, then, came to Lala and wept, and he wept so bitterly that his tears fell on the way and wherever a tear fell a white lily grew.

"Why dost thou weep, Sultan Haroun?" asked Lala the fairy.

"How can I not weep," said Sultan Haroun, "when I have only one daughter, who is as beautiful as the dawn, and I must deliver her up to the black genie with fiery eyes, who every year . . ."

Mirza broke off suddenly and was silent.

"Is Hania asleep?" he whispered to me.

"No, she isn't," answered the girl, in a sleepy voice.

"How can I not weep," said the Sultan Haroun," went on Mirza, "when I have only one daughter, whom I must deliver up to the genie?"

"Don't cry, Sultan," said Lala. "Mount the winged horse and ride to the Bora caves. Evil clouds will chase you as you go, but cast this poppy-seed upon them and they will immediately go to sleep. . . ."

Thus Mirza went on, and then he broke off again and looked at Hania.

The child was really asleep now. She was very tired, worn out with grief, and she had gone sound asleep. Selim and I scarcely dared to breathe, lest we should awake her. Her breathing was even and tranquil, only broken from time to time by deep sighs. Selim leaned his head on his hand and thought deeply, and I looked upwards and it seemed to me that I was being carried on angels' wings into the sky. I can't describe the delight that pervaded my whole being when I felt that that dear little thing was sleeping peacefully and with complete trust on my breast. A kind of thrill passed through my whole being. Unearthly, new, and unknown sounds of happiness arose in my soul and began to sing and play like an orchestra. Oh, how I loved Hania, how I loved her, with the love of a brother and guardian as yet, but limitlessly, immeasurably!

I quietly approached my mouth to Hania's plait and kissed it. There was nothing earthly in that kiss, for I and the kiss were as yet equally innocent.

Mirza suddenly started and awoke from his day-dream.

"How lucky you are, Henryk!" he whispered.

"Yes, Selim."

But we couldn't stay like that for ever.

"Let us not wake her, and let us carry her to her room," Mirza said to me.

"I'll carry her myself and you only open the door," I answered him.

I put my arm gently under the sleeping girl's head, and supported the head on the sofa. Then I carefully took Hania into my arms. I was still a child, but I came of an exceptionally strong race; and the little girl was small and slender, so I lifted her up as if she had been a feather. Mirza opened the door to the adjacent room, which was lit by a lamp, and so we came to the green closet, which I had set apart for her. Her little bed was already made there. A big fire crackled on the hearth and near it, poking it, sat old Wengrowska, who, seeing me thus burdened, cried:

"God save us, Master Henryk, what are you doing, straining yourself by lifting the girl like that! Couldn't you have wakened her and let her come herself?"

"Be quiet, Wengrowska!" I cried angrily. "Miss Hania, not 'the girl.' Do you hear, Wengrowska? Miss Hania's tired. Please don't wake her, undress her and put her quietly into bed. Remember she's an orphan, and that we must comfort her with our kindness for the loss of her grandfather."

"Yes, indeed, poor thing, she's an orphan," kind Wengrowska began to repeat emotionally.

Mirza kissed the old dame for that, and we went back to have supper.

Mirza, forgetting everything, got wild during supper, but I did not fall in with his humour; in the first place, because I was sad, and in the second because I considered that a dignified man, who was already a guardian, should not play pranks like a child.

That evening, too, Mirza got a scolding from Father Ludwik because, while we were at prayers in the chapel, he ran out of doors, scrambled up on to the low roof of the ice-house and began to howl. The yard dogs, of course, ran together from every side and made such a row, accompanying Mirza, that we couldn't say our prayers.

"Have you gone mad, Selim?" asked Father Ludwik.

"I, please your reverence, was praying in the Mahometan way."

"You young rascal, don't make fun of any religion!"

"But, sir, I want to become a Catholic, only I'm afraid of my father. What's Mahomet to me?"

The priest, attacked on his weak side, was silent, and we went to bed.

Selim and I had been given a room to ourselves, for the priest knew that we liked to chatter and he didn't want to be in our way. When I had undressed myself and noticed that Mirza began to undress himself too, without saying his prayers, I asked:

"Selim, do you really never pray?"

"Why, of course I do! If you like I'll start at once."

And, standing in the window, he raised his eyes to the moon, stretched out his arms to it, and began to cry, in a chanting voice:

"Oh Allah! Akbar Allah! Allah Kerim!"

Dressed as he was only in his night-clothes, with those eyes of his raised towards heaven, he was so beautiful to look upon that I couldn't take my eyes off him.

Then he began to explain to me.

"What am I to do?" he said. "I don't believe in that prophet of ours, who didn't allow others to have more than one wife, and had as many as he wanted to himself. Besides, I tell you, I like wine. I'm not allowed to be anything but a Mahometan, but I believe in God, and often pray as well as I can. What do I know anyhow? I know there's a God, and that's all about it."

But a moment later he'd already begun to talk of something else.

"D'you know what, Henryk?"

"What?"

"I have some lovely cigars. We aren't children any longer. We can smoke."

"Hand over."

Mirza jumped out of bed and took out a packet of cigars. We lit up, lay down in bed and smoked in silence, spitting out the taste in secret from each other on the far side of our beds.

After a while Selim said to me:

"Do you know what, Henryk? How I envy you! You're really grown up now."

"I should hope so."

"For you're a guardian now. Oh, if only somebody would leave someone under my guardianship!"

"That's not so easy, and besides, where could you find another like Hania in the world?"

"But do you know what?" I added, in the tone of a dignified grown-up; "do you know, I expect it may even come to it that I shan't go to school. A man who has duties at home can't go to school."

"Oh . . . what nonsense you talk! What, you won't do any more lessons? And what about the university?"

"Well, you know how I like study, but duty comes first. Perhaps my parents'll send Hania to Warsaw with me."

"They wouldn't even dream of such a thing."

"So long as I'm at school, it's not likely, but when I'm a student they'll hand her over to me. Why, don't you know what being a student means?"

"Well, well, maybe! You'll look after her, and then you'll marry her."

At that I started up in bed.

"Mirza, have you gone mad?"

"And why shouldn't you? At school a fellow's not even allowed to marry, but a student can not only have a wife but even children. Ha ha!"

But at that moment the prerogatives and all the privileges of a student didn't matter to me at all. Mirza's question lit up, as if with a flash of lightning, that side of my heart which had hitherto been in darkness to me. A thousand thoughts, like a thousand birds, flew suddenly through my head. Marry my dear, my beloved orphan—yes! That was a flash of lightning, a flash of new thoughts and emotions. It seemed to me that suddenly someone had brought light into the darkness of my heart. Love, though deep and hitherto brotherly, blushed rosily on a sudden in that light, and grew warm from that light with a warmth hitherto unknown. Marry her, Hania, that fair-haired little angel, my dearest, my most beloved Hania! . . . In a low and now quieter voice I repeated, like an echo, my former question:

"Mirza, have you gone mad?"

"I'd bet that you're in love with her already," retorted Mirza.

I made no reply, put out the light, then seized the corner of the pillow, and began to kiss it.

Yes, I was in love with her already!

III

THE second, or perhaps the third day after the funeral, my father, who had been telegraphed for, arrived. I trembled lest he should revoke my arrangements for Hania, and my forebodings were, to a certain extent, justified. My father praised me and embraced me for my zeal and conscientiousness in the fulfilment of my duties; it obviously rejoiced him. He even repeated several times "Our blood!" which he only said when he was very much pleased with me: he did not guess at all how selfish that zeal already was, but my arrangements were not very much to his taste. Maybe Madame d'Yves's exaggerated story was somewhat the cause of that, although actually during the last few days, since the night of Nicholas's death, I had made Hania the most important person in the whole house. He did not like, either, my plan of having her educated in the same manner as my sisters.

"I don't revoke or cancel anything. That's your mother's affair," he said to me. "She will decide as she wishes. That's her department. But it would be worth while to consider what's better for the girl herself."

"But education, father, can never hurt anybody. I've heard you saying that yourself."

"Yes, for a man," he replied. "For education gives him a position in the world. But it's another matter with a woman. A woman's education should be appropriate to the position she will have later on. A girl like that only needs a moderate education: she doesn't want French, music, or things like that. With a moderate education Hania will more easily find a husband, some honest employé."

"Father!"

He looked at me in amazement.

"What's the matter with you?"

I was the colour of a beet, so red that it seemed as if the blood must come out and drip down my face. It got dark before my eyes. The putting of Hania on the same level as an employé seemed to me to be such blasphemy against the world of my dreams and hopes that I couldn't restrain a cry of indignation. And that blasphemy hurt me the more that it issued from my father's mouth. It was the first cold water thrown by reality on the hot faith of youth, the first projectile aimed by life at the magic edifice of illusion; the first disappointment and

disillusion of that kind, from the bitterness of which we defend ourselves with pessimism and unbelief. But as when a drop of water falls on white-hot iron, it only hisses, and at once turns into steam and nothingness, so is it with the hot human soul. Under the first touch of the cold hand of reality it does, indeed, hiss with pain, but at once heats reality itself with its own ardour.

So my father's words wounded me for the time, and wounded me in a strange way, for the result of them was that I did not feel offended with my father, but, as it were, with Hania; but soon, through that inward resistive force which exists only in youth, I cast them right away out of my soul for ever. My father did not understand my exaltation, and set it down to an exaggerated preoccupation with the duties imposed upon me, which, anyhow, was natural in one of my age and which, instead of making him angry, only flattered his feelings and weakened his opposition to the higher education of Hania. I agreed with my father that I was to write a letter to my mother, who was to remain abroad for a considerable time still, and was to ask her to give a final decision in the matter. I don't remember ever writing again such a long and heartfelt letter. In it I described old Nicholas's death, his last words, my wishes, fears, hopes. I touched the string of pity which in her heart always responded so easily to that touch; I depicted the uneasiness of my conscience if we did not do for Hania all that lay in our power: in short, in my own opinion, my letter was a real masterpiece of its kind, which was bound to have the desired effect. Somewhat calmed by that thought, I patiently awaited the reply, which came in the form of actually two letters: one to me and a second to Madame d'Yves. I had won the battle on all points. My mother not only agreed to the higher education of Hania, but most earnestly recommended it. "I would wish," wrote my kind mother, "that, if it is in accordance with your father's wishes, Hania should be considered in all respects as belonging to our family. We owe that to the memory of old Nicholas, to his affection for and devotion to us." Thus my triumph was as great as it was complete, and Selim shared it with me with his whole heart, for everything that had to do with Hania concerned him just as if he had been her guardian himself.

The liking he felt and the solicitude he showed for the orphan began, even, truth to tell, to anger me a little, and the more because, from that memorable night when I became conscious of my own feelings, my relation to Hania changed considerably.

I felt, as it were, an uncertainty with her. My former affection and innocent intimacy disappeared completely. Only a few days before the girl had gone to sleep quietly on my breast; at the very thought of that my hair stood up. A few days before I had, like a brother, kissed her pale little mouth when I bade her good morning and good night. Now the touch of her hand burnt me or thrilled me with delight. I began to worship her as the object of first love is generally worshipped, and when the innocent young girl, having no idea of anything, knowing nothing, showed me the same affection as formerly, I was angry in my soul with her, and regarded myself as sacrilegious.

Love brought me unknown happiness, but also unknown vexations. If I had had any one to confide my vexation to, if I could have cried on someone's breast, to do which, speaking parenthetically, I had often a strange desire, I should infallibly have been relieved of half the burden that weighed upon my soul. I could, it is true, have avowed all to Selim, but I was afraid of his disposition. I knew that at the first moment he would be full of sympathy, but who could warrant me that on the second day he would not, with his characteristic cynicism and frivolous words, soil my ideal, which I dared not touch with any light thought? I was always disposed to be rather self-contained; but, besides this, there was one great difference between me and Selim. It was this: I was always rather sentimental, while Selim had not a pennyworth of sentimentality in him. I could only love in a melancholy way, Selim only gaily. So I hid my love from everybody, even almost from myself, and actually nobody perceived it. In the course of a few days, never having seen any example, I learned by instinct to cover all the symptoms of that love: the confusion, the blushes which flooded me when Hania was mentioned in my presence; in short, I developed very great cunning, cunning of the kind with which sometimes a sixteen-year-old boy can mislead the most watchful eye which is observing him. I hadn't the slightest intention of showing my feelings to Hania. I loved her, and that sufficed me. Sometimes, only, when we remained alone together, I had an inclination to kneel before her or kiss the hem of her frock.

Selim, meanwhile, played wild pranks, laughed, joked, and was gay for us both. It was he who first called a smile to Hania's face when, once, at breakfast, he proposed to Father Ludwik to be converted to Mahometanism and to marry Madame

d'Yves. The Frenchwoman, who was ready enough to take offence, and the priest, could not even get angry, for when he made up to them, when he looked at them and smiled, the matter ended with a slight scolding and general laughter. In his conduct towards Hania there was evident a certain tenderness and solicitude; but his inborn gaiety prevailed even in that. He was much more intimate with her than was I. It was evident that Hania, too, liked him very much, for as often as he entered the room she became gayer. He made fun of me, or rather of my melancholy, continually, for he took it for the artificial dignity of one who was in haste to be grown up.

"You'll all see that he'll be a priest," he would say.

Then I would throw down the first object that came to my hand, so that, bending to pick it up, I might hide the blushes which covered my face; and Father Ludwik would take snuff and reply:

"To the glory of God! To the glory of God!"

But meanwhile the Christmas holidays came to an end. My faint hopes that I should remain at home were not at all realized. One evening the great guardian was told to be ready for the road next day. We had to start early, for we had to call in at Chorzele, where Selim was to take leave of his father. In fact, we got up at six, while it was still dark. Ah, my soul was then as gloomy as that dark and windy morning. Selim was also in the worst of humours. As soon as ever he got out of bed, he declared that the world was stupid and wretchedly ordered, with which I completely agreed; then we both, having dressed ourselves, made our way from the "school quarters" to the manor-house for breakfast. It was dark out of doors; little flakes of sharp snow, whirled about by the wind, hit our faces. The windows of the dining room were already lighted up. The sleigh stood, with the horses harnessed to it, before the porch and our baggage was upon it. The horses shook their bells, the dogs barked round the sleigh. All that, taken collectively, constituted, for us at any rate, so sad a picture that our hearts sank at the sight of it. Entering the dining-room, we found my father and Father Ludwik, both of them walking about with serious faces. But Hania was not there. With a beating heart I looked at the door of the green closet, to see if she was coming out, or if I was to go away without even a farewell. Meanwhile, my father and Father Ludwik began to give us advice and moral instruction. They both began by saying

that now we were of an age when it was unnecessary to repeat to us what work and learning meant, but neither of them spoke of anything else. I listened to all this, catching a word here and there, crunching toast and swallowing warm wine with a contracted throat. Suddenly my heart began to beat so hard that I could scarcely remain sitting on my chair, for I heard a rustling in Hania's room, the door opened, and there entered — in a dressing-gown and curl-papers, Madame d'Yves, who embraced me affectionately, and over whose head, because of my disappointment, I felt inclined to throw a glass of warm wine. She, too, expressed the hope that such big boys as we were would study very hard. To this Mirza replied that the memory of her curl-papers would give him strength and perseverance in work. Meantime Hania did not make her appearance.

However, I was not to drink this cup of bitterness to the dregs. When we rose from the breakfast-table Hania came out of her room, still sleepy, her face all rosy, her hair in disorder. When I clasped her hand, wishing her good morning, it was hot. It immediately occurred to me that Hania was feverish because of my departure, and a whole tender scene was enacted in my mind, but the heat of her hand was simply caused by sleep. A moment later my father and Father Ludwik went to get letters which they wanted us to take with us to Warsaw, and Mirza rode out of the room on an immense dog which had come in a minute before. I remained alone with Hania. There were tears in my eyes; warm, tender words were on the tip of my tongue. I didn't intend to avow that I loved her, but I was forcibly inclined to say something such as: "My dear, my beloved Hania," and, at the same time, to kiss her hand. This was the only suitable moment for an outburst of the kind, for in the presence of others, though I might have done it without attracting any one's attention, I should not have dared. Yet I wasted that moment most shamefully. I even got so far as to come near to her, to stretch out my hand to her, but I did it somehow so awkwardly and unnaturally and I said "Hania!" to her in so unnatural a voice that I immediately drew back and was silent. I wanted to slap my own face. Meanwhile Hania herself began to speak:

"Oh dear, how dreary it will be without you, Mr. Henryk!"

"I shall come back at Easter," I replied in a gruff, low, unnatural bass.

"But Easter's so far off!"

"Not at all!" I growled.

Just at that moment Mirza rushed into the room, and my father, Father Ludwik, Madame d'Yves, and several more people followed. The words "Get into the sleigh! Get into the sleigh!" sounded in my ears.

We all went out into the porch. There my father and Father Ludwik, one after the other, embraced me. When Hania's turn came for me to take leave of her, I had a violent impulse to seize her in my arms and kiss her as I used to do, but I couldn't even do that.

"Good-bye, Hania!" said I, holding out my hand to her, and a hundred voices wept within my soul, and a hundred most tender, caressing words were on my lips.

Suddenly I perceived that the girl was crying and, just as suddenly, a very devil of contrariness, a violent desire, such as I have from time to time felt in the later course of my life, to scratch open my own wounds, arose within me; so, though my heart was bursting, I said coldly and gruffly:

"Don't be needlessly upset, Hania!"

Having said these words I entered the sleigh.

Meanwhile Mirza was saying good-bye to every one. Running up to Hania, he seized both her hands, and, though the girl drew back, began to kiss them passionately by turns. Oh, how I wanted to beat him at that moment! Having kissed Hania he jumped into the sleigh. My father cried, "Off with you!" Father Ludwik, making the sign of the cross, began to give us his blessing for the journey. The driver shouted "Hetta! ho!" to the horses, the sleigh-bells tinkled, the snow swished under the runners, and we drove off.

"Villain! brigand!" I began to call myself inwardly. "So that's the way you said good-bye to your Hania! You tormented her, you scolded her for her tears, that you're not worthy of. The tears of an orphan . . ."

I raised the collar of my fur coat and burst into tears like a little child, but quietly, lest Mirza should catch me crying. It appeared, however, that Mirza saw it quite well, but, being himself moved, said nothing to me at first. But we hadn't reached Chorzele when he said:

"Henryk!"

"What?"

"Are you blubbering?"

"Leave me alone!"

And again silence fell between us.

But a minute later Mirza began again.

"Henryk!"

"What?"

"Are you blubbing?"

I made no reply. Suddenly Mirza bent over, caught some snow in his hand, lifted off my cap, scattered the snow over my head and put on the cap again.

"That 'll cool you!"

IV

I DID not return home at Easter, for the approach of my final school examination prevented it. Besides, my father wanted me to pass, before the commencement of the university year, the entrance examination to the university, for he knew that I shouldn't want to work during the long vacation, and that I should inevitably forget at least half of what I had learned at school. So I worked very hard. Besides my usual hours in school, Selim and I took special lessons from a young undergraduate who, having not long since entered the university, knew best what it was needful to know for the purpose.

These were memorable times for me, for it was then that the whole edifice of my ideas, so laboriously built up by Father Ludwik, my father, and the whole atmosphere of our quiet nest, fell in ruins. The young undergraduate was a great radical in every respect. Giving me lessons on Roman history, he succeeded so well, teaching me about the reforms of the Gracchi, in imparting to me his disgust and scorn for the great oligarchy, that my very conservative convictions were dispersed like smoke. With what deep conviction my teacher told me, for instance, that a man who is soon to occupy the powerful and, in every respect, influential position of a university student should be free from all superstitions, and should look upon them with the compassion of a true philosopher! He was, on the whole, of the opinion that a man is most capable of ruling the world and exerting a powerful influence upon humanity between his eighteenth and twenty-third year, for, later on, he gradually becomes an idiot, i.e. a conservative.

He spoke with pity of people who were neither undergraduates nor university professors; however, he had certain ideals of his

own which he was for ever talking about. It was then that I first heard of the existence of Moleschott and Büchner, the two learned men whom he quoted the most. You should have heard the enthusiasm with which our tutor spoke of the scientific discoveries of recent times, of the great truths which a blind, superstitious past had passed over, but which the latest men of learning had, with unheard-of daring, raised out of "the dust of oblivion," and had proclaimed to the whole world. As he expressed opinions of this kind, he would shake his luxuriant, curly mane, and smoke an immense number of cigarettes, asseverating meanwhile that he was such a practised smoker that it was quite as easy for him to let the smoke out by his nose as by his mouth, and that there wasn't another man in Warsaw who could do it like him. Then he was wont to stand up, put on his cloak, which lacked half its buttons, and declare that he must hurry, for he had "a little rendezvous" still to-day. So saying he would wink in a mysterious manner, and add that Mirza and I were too young for him to give us more information about his rendezvous, but that later on we should understand, without his telling us, what it all meant.

Besides all this, which assuredly would not have pleased our parents very much in the young student, he had his really good qualities. Thus, he knew well himself what he taught us and was, besides, a very fanatic for learning. He wore broken boots, a worn cloak, a cap that looked like an old bird's nest, he never had a penny to bless himself with, but he never worried about his personal difficulties, his poverty, almost misery. He lived by his passion for learning, and didn't care about his personal, far from cheerful, lot. Mirza and I looked upon him as some higher, supernatural being, as an ocean of wisdom, as an unassailable authority. We firmly believed that if any one could save humanity in case of any danger, it would inevitably be he, this imposing genius, who, moreover, was, no doubt, himself of the same opinion. But we adhered to his opinions as if stuck to them with birdlime. For my part, I went, perhaps, even farther than my master. This was the result of a natural reaction against my former upbringing, and besides, the young undergraduate really opened the door for me to unknown worlds of knowledge, in the face of which the little circle of my ideas before that was extremely narrow. Dazzled by these new truths I had not too much time for thoughts or dreams of Hania. At first, immediately after my arrival, my ideal was for ever in

my thoughts. The letters I received from her fed this fire on the altar of my heart, but before the ocean of the young undergraduate's ideas, our whole little country world, so quiet, so peaceful, began to dwindle more and more, to grow smaller in my eyes, and together with it, Hania's form, though it did not disappear altogether, was, as it were, veiled in a light mist. As to Mirza, he trod with me the path of violent reforms, and thought the less of Hania because opposite our student quarters there was a window in which a schoolgirl named Josey used to sit. Selim began to languish for her, and they looked at each other for whole days together from the two windows, like two birds in their cages. Selim maintained with unshaken certainty that it was "this one and no other." Sometimes it would happen that, lying flat on his back, on the bed, he would study and study, and then would throw the book on the floor, jump up, catch hold of me and cry, laughing like a madman:

"Oh, my Josey, how I love you!"

"Go to the devil, Selim!" I would say to him

"Oh, it's you, not Josey!" Selim would reply, feigning amazement, and would return to his books.

At last examination time came. We both, Selim and I, passed our final school examination and matriculation very well, and then we were as free as birds, but we remained three days still in Warsaw. We spent this time in buying ourselves undergraduate uniforms, and in a celebration of the occasion, which our master considered indispensable; namely, we had all three to get tipsy in an old wine-shop.

After the second bottle, when my head and Selim's had already begun to whirl, and our former crammer's, but now colleague's, cheeks were flushed, suddenly, unusual emotion and an inclination to demonstrations of affection took possession of our hearts, and the master said:

"So now you've become men, my boys, and the world stands open before you. You can now amuse yourselves, throw money about, play at being young gentlemen of fortune, fall in love, but I tell you these things are follies. A superficial life like that, devoid of thought for which we live and work and fight, is folly too. But in order to live sensibly and fight wisely, one must look soberly at things. As regards myself, I think that I do look soberly. I believe in nothing I don't touch, and I advise you to do the same. Why, good gracious, there are so many ways of life and thought in the world, and everything in

such confusion, that one should have the devil knows what kind of head if one is not to err. But I cling to learning, and there's an end of it. I won't be caught with fal-lals. I won't break a bottle over any one's head for saying that life is a stupid thing; but there's knowledge. If it weren't for that I would shoot myself in the head. In my opinion every one has a right to do so, and I will infallibly do it if learning fails me. But it won't. Everything may disappoint you; you love, and a woman deceives you. You believe, but the moment comes when you doubt. But you may sit until your death investigating the oesophagi of infusoria and not even look round till, one fine day, it grows stupid and dark to you, and that's the end; an obituary notice, a portrait in the illustrated papers, a more or less stupid summary of your life, *finita comœdia* . And then, nothing more. I give you my word for that, my lads. You may boldly refuse to believe in any nonsense. Learning, my sparks, that's the basis of everything. And besides, all that has the further advantage that, if you occupy yourself with things of that sort, you may boldly go about in boots with holes in them and sleep on a straw mattress. It makes no difference to you at all. Do you understand?"

"To the health and in honour of learning!" cried Selim, whose eyes were shining like coals.

The master pushed up his immense, woolly mane of hair with his hand, emptied his glass, and then, drawing in smoke, let two immense streams of it out through his nose and went on:

"Besides science — Selim, you're drunk already — besides science, then, there's philosophy and there are ideas. These also can fill life to overflowing. But I prefer science. I will even say to you that I scoff at philosophy, especially at idealistic philosophy. It's all talk. It's by way of pursuing truth, but it chases it as a dog chases its own tail. But in general I can't stand idle talk. I like facts. You can't squeeze cheese out of water. As to great ideas, that's another matter. It's worth while to risk your neck for them, but you and your fathers are walking in stupid ways. I tell you as much. Long live great ideas!"

Again we emptied our glasses. We were drunk. The dark room in the wine-shop seemed to us to be still darker; the light on the table burnt faintly; smoke veiled the engravings that hung on the walls. Outside the window a beggar-man was singing a hymn: "Holy, heavenly, angelic Lady!" and between

the verses he played a sad beggar's melody on the fiddle. My heart was filled with strange feelings. I believed the master's words, but I felt that he hadn't yet spoken of everything that goes to fill up life. For me something was wanting; involuntarily a yearning emotion came over me, so, under the influence of dreaminess, wine, and momentary exaltation, I said in a low voice:

"And woman, sir! And loving, devoted woman; does she count for nothing at all in life?"

Selim began to sing:

Woman's ever changeful:
Foolish he who trusts her

The master looked at me strangely, as if he was thinking of something else, but he soon shook himself and said:

"Oho! Already the tip of a sentimental ear is sticking out. Do you know, Selim will make a man sooner than you. The devil will get you. Mind what you are about, mind what you are about, I tell you, lest some petticoat gets in your way and spoils your life. Woman! woman!" (Here the master winked as was his wont.) "I know something about those goods. I can't complain; my word! I can't complain! But I know, too, that you shouldn't give the devil a finger, for he will at once seize your whole arm. Woman! Love! Our whole misfortune is that we make great things out of trifles. If you want to play, as I do, play, but don't pay good money for worthless goods. Do you think I complain of women? I wouldn't even dream of it! No, I like them, but I don't let myself be taken with the chaff of my own imagination. I remember when I fell in love for the first time, with a certain Lola. I thought that her frock, for instance, was a holy thing, and it was calico. There you are. Is she to blame that she walked in the mud instead of flying through the sky? No, it's I who was stupid, for I insisted on fastening wings on her. Man is a rather limited kind of animal. One and another of them carries Heaven knows what ideal in his heart, but as, besides, he feels the need of loving, when he meets the first little goose that comes in his way, he says to himself: 'That's she!' Then he recognizes that he's made a mistake, and the result of that little mistake is that the devil gets him, or he becomes an idiot for life."

"Yet you'll admit," said I, "that man feels the need to love, and you, yourself, I'm sure, feel that need like others."

A scarcely perceptible smile flitted over the master's lips.

"One may," said he, "satisfy every need in various ways. I advise people to do as I do. I've already said that I don't make great things of trifles. I'm a sober man, my word! soberer than I am now. But I've seen many people whose lives were seized and tangled like thread for the sake of one silly woman; so, I repeat, it's not worth while to put your whole life into it, there are better things and higher aims, and love is a trifle. To the health of sobriety!"

"To the health of woman!" cried Selim.

"All right," rejoined the master. "They're pleasant creatures, if only one doesn't take them seriously. To the health of woman!"

"To Josey's health!" I cried, clinking glasses with Selim.

"Wait, it's my turn now," he retorted. "To the health . . . the health of your Hania! One's as good as the other."

My blood boiled and sparks flew from my eyes.

"Hold your tongue, Mirza," I cried. "Don't utter that name in a low wine-shop like this!"

So saying I threw my glass to the ground, so that it broke into a thousand pieces.

"Have you gone mad?" cried the master.

But I hadn't gone mad at all, only anger boiled within me and burnt like a flame. I could listen to everything that the master said about women, I could even enjoy it, I could scorn them as the others did; but I could do all that because I didn't apply the words and the tips to any of my own, because it never even entered my head that the general theory was to be applied to those dear to me. But when I heard the name of my purest of orphans uttered lightly in that wine-shop, amid smoke, dirt, empty bottles, corks, and cynical conversation, it seemed to me that I had heard such disgusting sacrilege, such a smirching of little Hania and such a wrong done to her, that I almost lost my senses with anger.

Mirza looked at me for a moment with amazement, but very soon his face, too, began to darken, his eyes to sparkle, and knots of veins to stand out on his forehead. His features lengthened and sharpened, like a real Tartar's.

"You forbid me to say what I like!" he cried in a hoarse voice, broken by his quick breathing.

Luckily the master intervened at that moment.

"You're not worthy of the uniforms you wear!" he cried.

"What, will you fight or pull each other's ears like schoolboys? Nice philosophers you are, breaking glasses on each other's heads! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! You talk of general questions, indeed! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! From an intellectual fight you descend to one with fists! Get on with you! And I tell you, that I raise my glass in honour of universities, and that you are rascals if you don't clink glasses in amity, and if you leave a drop in them."

We both cooled down. . . But it was Selim who, though he was the most drunk, cooled first.

"I beg your pardon," he said in a soft voice. "I'm a fool."

We embraced affectionately and emptied our glasses to the very bottom in honour of universities. Then the master started "*Gaudeamus*." The men serving at the counter began to stare in at us through the glass door leading to the shop. Outside it got dusk. We were all properly drunk. Our merriment reached its zenith and began slowly to subside. The master was the first to become meditative, and after a while he said:

"It's all very well, but, on the whole, life's stupid. Those are all artificial remedies and what happens to one in one's soul is another thing. To-morrow's the same as to-day: the same poverty, four bare walls, a straw mattress, boots with holes in them, and . . . so on endlessly. Work, work, and as for happiness . . . bah! A fellow deceives himself as well as he can, and drowns his thoughts. . . . Good-bye!"

So saying, he put on his cap that had the peak torn off, made a few mechanical movements intended to button up his uniform on non-existent buttons, lit a cigarette and, making a scornful gesture with his hand, said:

"There! Pay them, for I'm broke, and good-bye! You can remember me or not as you like. It makes no difference to me. I'm not one of your sentimental fellows. Good-bye, good fellows, both of you."

He said the last words in a low, moved voice, as if in defiance of his declarations that he wasn't sentimental. His poor heart needed love and could love like any other, but misfortune since his childhood's years, poverty and the indifference of men, had taught it to shut itself up within itself. His was a proud though ardent soul, and so always afraid of a repulse, if it was the first to show affection to another.

We remained alone for a moment, and were conscious of a

feeling of sadness. Perhaps it was a sad foreboding, for we were to see our poor master no more in this life. Neither he himself nor we guessed that already for a long time past the germs of a mortal, incurable malady were at work within his breast. Poverty, too great strain, feverish work over his books, sleepless nights and hunger, hastened its development. In autumn, at the beginning of October, our master died of consumption. Nor did many of his fellow-undergraduates follow his coffin to the grave, for it was vacation time, and only his poor mother, a vendor of holy pictures and wax candles, who had her stall under the shadow of the Dominican church, wept aloud for the son whom she had often not understood in his lifetime, but whom, as mothers will, she loved.

v

THE day after our drinking bout the carriage and horses came from old Mirza, from Chorzele, and Selim and I started early in the morning for home. We had quite two days and nights of driving before us, so we got up at dawn. In our block every one was still asleep, but in the annexe opposite there gleamed in the window, among the geraniums, wallflowers, and fuchsias, the little face of Josey the schoolgirl. Selim, having taken his travelling bag in his hand, and put on his college cap, stood in the window ready for the road, so as to let it be seen that he was leaving, and he had in reply a melancholy glance from among the geraniums. But when he put one hand on his heart and blew a kiss with the other, the little face among the flowers blushed and drew back quickly into the dark depths of the room. Downstairs on the pavement in the courtyard, a four-wheeled gig, drawn by four fine horses, rumbled up. 't was time to say good-bye and to get in, but Selim waited and stood persistently in the window, waiting to see if he could catch yet a glimpse. But his hope was vain, and the little window remained empty. It was only when we went downstairs that, passing the entrance to the dark hall of the annexe, we saw on the stairs two white stockings, a brown frock, a little form bent over the stairs, and two bright eyes, shaded with a hand, gazing out from the gloom into the light of day. Mirza at once rushed into the hall and I, having got into the gig, which stood close by it, heard certain whispers and sounds, very like the sound of kisses. Then Mirza came out flushed, half laughing, half moved, and got in beside

me. The coachman whipped up the horses, involuntarily Mirza and I looked at the little window. Josey's little face gleamed once more among the flowers; another moment and a little hand holding a white handkerchief appeared; one more farewell greeting and the gig rolled into the street, carrying me and poor Josey's handsome ideal away.

It was very early in the morning, the town was as yet asleep; the rosy light of dawn glittered on the windows of the sleeping houses. Here and there only an early bird of a passer-by awoke with his footsteps the slumbering echoes; here and there a doorkeeper was sweeping the street; sometimes a cart with vegetables rumbled along on its way from the country to the town market. Except for such things, all was bright and airy and fresh, as it usually is on a summer morning. Our little gig, drawn by four Tartar horses, leaped over the pavement like a nut drawn by a string.

Soon a fresh, cool breeze from the river moistened our faces, the bridge resounded under the hoots of the horses, and after half an hour's drive we were beyond the toll-gates, among extensive fields and corn and woods.

Our lungs breathed in great breaths of the splendid morning air, and our eyes took their fill of the country round. The earth was awakening from sleep, the pearly dew hung on the wet leaves of the trees and glittered on ears of grain of every kind. The birds hopped about merrily in the hedges, welcoming the lovely day with noisy chirping and chattering. The woods and meadows were freeing themselves from the morning mist as from swaddling clothes; here and there water glittered on the meadows, on which, among the golden blooms of the marigolds, the stork waded. Pink smoke went straight up from the chimneys of country cottages, a light wind bent the yellow fields of ripe rye like a wave, and shook the damp of the night from them. Joy was over everything. It seemed that everything was awakening, living; and that the whole countryside was singing:

When shine the sun's first rays
The earth and sea loud praise . . .

What feelings were then in our hearts every one will understand if he remembers how, in his youth, he returned home on a lovely summer morning like this. The years of our childhood and the dependence of schoolboys were already behind us, our youth spread wide before us, like a luxuriant prairie, covered

with flowers, with an unlimited horizon, an interesting and unknown land, to which we were starting under good auspices: young, strong, almost with wings on our shoulders, like eaglets. Youth is the greatest of all the earth's treasures, and of that treasure, in spite of all our wealth, we had not spent a farthing.

We did the journey quickly, for at all our chief halts relays of horses awaited us. On the second day, after a whole night on the road, towards evening, driving out of a wood, we saw Chorzele, or rather the pointed top of the household minaret, shining in the rays of the setting sun. Soon we drove on to the dike, which was planted on both sides with willows and privet, and on both sides of which lay immense ponds with water-mills and sawmills. We were accompanied on our way by the sleepy crooning and croaking of the frogs floating about among the luxuriant grass of the banks, in the water warmed by the heat of the day. One could see that the day was declining towards its close. Herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, hidden by clouds of dust, were returning to the farm-buildings by way of the dike. Here and there groups of people with sickles, scythes, and rakes over their shoulders, moved homewards, singing to themselves, "Dana, oy dana!" These good folk stopped the gig, kissing Selim's hands, and welcoming him heartily. Soon the sun sloped yet further towards the west, and hid half its bright shield behind the reeds. Only a broad, golden ribbon of light reflected itself in the middle of the ponds, on the banks of which the trees looked at themselves in the smooth water. We turned a little to the right, and at once, amid limes, poplars, red firs, and mountain ashes, t^he white walls of the manor-house of Chorzele showed themselves. A bell sounded in the courtyard, calling people to supper, and simultaneously from the little tower of the minaret sounded the mournful, chanting voice of the household muezzin, proclaiming that the starry night was falling from heaven to earth, and that Allah was great. As if accompanying the muezzin, the stork, standing like an Etruscan pitcher in his nest, set on the top of a tree above the roof of the manor, roused for a moment from his statue-like calm, raised his beak like a bronze crane to the sky, then let it drop on to his breast and chattered, nodding his head as if in greeting. I looked at Selim. He had tears in his eyes, and his face was bright with the incomparable sweetness peculiar to him alone. We drove into the courtyard.

Before the glazed porch sat old Mirza, and, blowing blue smoke

from his pipe, looked with a cheerful eye upon that quiet and industrious life, swarming in that charming picture. Having perceived his boy, he rose up quickly, caught him in his arms, and pressed him long and closely to his breast; for, though he was severe to his son, he loved him above all things. He immediately asked him about his examinations, then new embraces followed. All the numerous household staff had hastily assembled to greet the young master, the dogs jumped joyfully about him. From the porch rushed full tilt a tame she-wolf, old Mirza's pet. "Zula! Zula!" Selim called her, and she jumped, placing her immense paws on his shoulders, licked his face, and then began to run madly round and round him, whining and showing her terrible teeth for joy.

Then we went into the dining-room. I looked upon Chorzele and all that was in it as a man looks who desires renovation. Nothing had changed in it; the portraits of Selim's ancestors, cavalry captains, ensigns, hung on the walls as before. Terrible Mirza, the colonel of Tartar horse in Sobieski's time, looked at me as of yore out of his slanting, ominous eyes; but his face, all over sabre-cuts, seemed to me still uglier and more terrible. Mirza, Selim's father, had changed most of all. His mane of hair, which had been black, had become grizzled, his luxuriant moustache was almost completely white, and the Tartar type was more evident than ever in his features. Oh, what a difference there was between old Mirza and Selim, between that bony visage, severe, even grim, and that simply angelic face, like a flower, fresh and sweet! But it is difficult for me, too, to describe the love with which the old man looked upon the boy, and how his eyes followed his every movement.

Not wishing to intrude, I kept on one side, but the old man, hospitable like a true Polish gentleman, soon began to entertain me and to embrace me and to try to keep me for the night. I wouldn't agree to stay the night, for I was in a hurry to get home, but I had to stay for supper. I drove away from Chorzele late at night, and when I came near to my home the Pleiades had already risen in the heavens, which meant that it was by now midnight. The windows in the villages no longer shone, only far off, near the wood, one could see little lights shining from the pitch-hut. Dogs barked near the cottages. In the lime avenue, which led to our manor, it was dark as far as the eye could see; a man rode past us, leading horses, humming a song under his breath, but I did not recognize his face. I drove

up to the porch of the manor-house; the windows were dark; it was evident that every one was asleep; only the dogs, rushing from every side, began to bark round the gig. I got out and knocked at the door. For a long time I couldn't make myself heard. I began to feel worried, for I had thought they would be expecting me. It was only after some time that lights began to move here and there on the window-panes, and a sleepy voice, which I recognized as Franek's, asked:

"Who's there?"

I spoke, and Franek opened the door and seized my hand to kiss it. I asked if all were well.

"Yes," replied Franek, "but the master's gone off to town, and is only to come back to-morrow."

So saying he brought me into the dining-room, lit a lamp that hung above the table and went out to prepare tea. I remained alone for a moment with my thoughts and with my quickly beating heart. But that moment was a short one, for soon Father Ludwik, in a dressing-gown, good Madame d'Yves, similarly attired, with her usual curl-papers and a nightcap, and Casimir, who had returned a month earlier from school for his holidays, came in. The good souls welcomed me with emotion; they wondered at the way I had grown; Father Ludwik maintained that I had become manly, Madame d'Yves that I had grown handsomer. It was only after some time that Father Ludwik, poor soul, began to ask me questions about my school certificate, and, when he learned of my successes, he was moved even to tears, took me in his arms and called me his dear boy. And just then there came from the other room the pattering of bare little feet, and my two little sisters in their nightdresses and nightcaps only, rushed in, repeating: "Hen's come home! Hen's come home!" and jumped on to my knees. It was in vain that Madame d'Yves tried to make them ashamed of themselves, saying that it was an unheard-of thing that two young ladies (one was eight years old, the other nine), should show themselves to people in such undress. The little girls, without a by-your-leave, hugged me round the neck with their little arms, pressing their lovely little mouths to my cheeks. After a moment I asked timidly after Hania.

"Oh, she's grown," replied Madame d'Yves. "She'll come here in a moment; most likely she's titivating herself."

However I hadn't to wait long, for five minutes later Hania entered the room. I looked at her and—good Heavens! what a

change six months had wrought in that frail, thin, orphan girl! There stood before me a young lady, almost grown up, or at least, growing up. Her figure had filled out and was beautifully rounded. Her complexion was delicate but healthy, there were blushes like the reflection of dawn on her cheeks. Health, youth, freshness, charm, emanated from her, as from an unfolding rose. I noticed that she looked at me with curiosity out of her big blue eyes, but I saw, too, that she must have understood my wonder and the impression she made upon me, for an indescribable little smile wandered about the corners of her mouth. In the curiosity with which we looked upon each other there was already a certain bashfulness as of youth and maiden. Oh, that simple, affectionate intercourse as of brother and sister, that childish intercourse, had fled away on wings, never more to return.

Ah, how lovely was she with that little smile and with quiet joy in her eyes!

The light of the lamp that hung above the table fell upon her fair hair. She was dressed in a black frock and in a light cloak, also black, donned in haste, which she held together on her breast under her little, white neck; but in her dress there was perceptible a certain charming disorder, resulting from the haste with which she had put it on. The warmth of sleep wafted from her. When I touched her hand in greeting that hand was warm, soft, velvety, and its touch thrilled me deliciously. Hania had changed inwardly as well as outwardly. I had left a simple young girl, half of the servant class; now she was a young lady with a noble expression of face and noble movements, testifying to good breeding and to having been accustomed to good society. The soul of one who was morally and intellectually awake looked from her eyes. She had ceased in every respect to be a child. This was shown by that indescribable little smile of hers, and by the kind of innocent coquetry with which she looked at me, a coquetry which testified to the fact that she understood how different our relations to each other now were from what they had been before. I soon saw that she was even in certain respects superior to me, for I, although I had studied more, was in my attitude to life, in my ability to comprehend every position, every word, still a rather simple boy. Hania was freer in her bearing to me than I to her. My dignity as a guardian, as the young master, had taken to itself wings. On the journey I had been composing my greeting to Hania, what

I should say to her, how I should always be kind and indulgent to her, but all these plans fell into complete ruins. The position had, somehow, begun to take the form that it was not I who seemed good and kind to her, but rather it was she who seemed good and kind to me. At first I did not clearly realize this, but I felt it more than I understood it. I had arranged how I should ask her what she was learning and had learned, how she had spent her time, if Madame d'Yves and Father Ludwik were pleased with her; but it was she who, always with that little smile at the corners of her mouth, asked me what I had been up to, what I had learned, and what I was thinking of doing in the future. Everything fell out strangely different from what I had intended. In a word, our relations to each other were simply reversed.

After an hour of conversation we all went to rest. I went to my room a little dreamy, a little surprised, a little disappointed and defeated, with varying impressions. Love, fed again, began to force its way, like a flame through the chinks of a burning building, and soon it covered those other impressions completely. It was just simply Hania's form, that maiden form, delicious, full of charm, just as I had seen her, tantalizing, with the warmth of sleep wafting from her, with a white hand holding her disordered clothing together on her breast, and with her plaits let down, that awoke my young imagination, and hid all other things from me.

I went to sleep with her picture under my eyelids.

VI

NEXT day I got up very early and ran off into the garden. The morning was a lovely one, full of dew and the scent of flowers. I ran swiftly to the hornbeam walk, for my heart told me I should meet Hania there. But evidently my heart was too prone to presentiments, for Hania was not there at all. It was only after breakfast that I found her alone, and asked her if she would like to take a walk in the garden. She agreed willingly and, having run to her room, came back in a moment with a big rice-straw hat on her head, which shaded her forehead and eyes, and with a parasol in her hand; from under this hat she smiled mischievously at me, as if she would say: "Look how pretty I am!" We went out to the garden together. I

took the way to the hornbeam avenue, and as we walked I thought how to begin the conversation and also that Hania, who could surely do so better than I, wouldn't help me, nay, rather, was amused at my embarrassment. So I walked beside her in silence, cutting off with my riding-whip the heads of the flowers that grew in the borders, until Hania burst out laughing and, catching hold of my riding-whip, said:

"What harm have those flowers done you, Mr. Henryk?"

"Oh, Hania, what do the flowers matter! But there, you see I can't begin to talk to you; you've changed greatly, Hania. Oh, how you've changed!"

"And what if I have? Does it anger you?"

"I wouldn't say that," I replied, half sadly; "but I can't get accustomed to it, for it seems to me that that little Hania, whom I once knew, and you are two different beings. That other one grew up with my memories, with . . . my heart, like a sister, Hania, like a sister, and so . . ."

"And so this one" (here she pointed to herself) "is strange to you, isn't she?" she asked softly.

"Hania, Hania, how can you even think such a thing?"

"Why, it's very natural, though perhaps sad," she rejoined. "You seek in your heart for the brotherly feelings you once had for me, and you don't find them. That's all!"

"No, Hania, I don't seek the old Hania in my heart, for she is always there; but I seek her in you, and as to my heart . . ."

"As to your heart," she broke in merrily; "I can guess what's happened to it. It stayed somewhere in Warsaw with some other fortunate little heart. That's easy to guess."

I looked deep into her eyes. I did not know myself if she was testing me a little, if, counting on the impression she had made on me the day before, and which I was unable to hide, she was playing with me in a rather cruel way. But suddenly there awoke in me, too, the desire to resist. I thought that I must look excessively comic, gazing at her with the look of a half-dead hind, so I conquered the emotions that moved me at that moment, and replied:

"And what if it really is so?"

A barely perceptible expression of surprise and, as it were, of discouragement, flitted over Hania's fair little face.

"If it really is so," she rejoined, "then it's you who've changed and not I."

So saying, she frowned slightly, and, looking at me sideways,

walked for a while in silence, while I strove to hide the joyful emotion which came over me at her words. "She says," I thought to myself, "that if I love another woman it's I who've changed, so she hasn't changed, so she . . ."

I dared not finish the sentence for joy at this clever deduction.

And with all that it wasn't I, not I but she, who was changed. That little girl of a year ago, who knew nothing of the wide world, who would never have thought of speaking of emotions, and for whom a conversation of the kind we were having would have been Chinese, to-day carried on that conversation freely and dexterously, as if she were reciting a lesson she had learned. How that mind, childish so short a time ago, had developed, become supple! But miracles of that kind do happen to young ladies. One fine evening she will go to sleep a child and wake up a maiden, with another world of thought and emotion. For Hania, who was naturally quick of comprehension, perceptive, and impressionable, six months, the passing of her sixteenth year, life in another social sphere, study, books read perhaps by stealth—all that more than sufficed.

But meanwhile we walked side by side in silence. Now Hania was the first to break it:

"So you are in love, Mr. Henryk?"

"Maybe," I replied with a smile.

"Then you'll yearn for Warsaw?"

"No, Hania. I'd like never to go away from here."

Hania looked at me swiftly. It was evident that she wanted to say something to me and kept silence, but after a moment she lightly hit her dress with her parasol and said, as if answering her own thoughts:

"Oh, how childish I am!"

"Why do you say so, Hania?" asked I.

"Oh, nothing! Let's sit down on this bench and talk of something else. Isn't that a beautiful view?" she asked suddenly, with the smile I knew on her lips.

She sat down on the bench by a hedge, under an immense lime-tree, whence the view of the pond, the bank, and the wood beyond the pond, was really very beautiful. Hania pointed to it with her parasol, but I, though a lover of beautiful views, hadn't the least inclination to look at it, for, in the first place, I knew it perfectly well, and in the second I had before me Hania, a hundred times more beautiful than anything else around her, and, lastly, I was thinking of something else.

"How beautifully those trees there are reflected in the water," said Hania.

"I see you 're an artist," I rejoined, not looking in the direction of the trees or the water.

"Father Ludwik is teaching me drawing. Oh, I've learned a great deal while you were away. I wanted to . . . but what's the matter with you? Are you angry with me?"

"No, Hania, I'm not angry, for I couldn't be angry with you; but I see that you're evading my questions and that—and that—oh, we're playing hide and seek with one another, instead of talking sincerely and trustfully to each other, like we used to do. Perhaps you don't feel it, but it's disagreeable to me, Hania! . . ."

Those simple words did nothing more than embarrass us both immensely; Hania, it is true, put both her hands in mine; I pressed those hands, perhaps too hard, and, oh, terrible to relate, bending quickly I kissed her, not at all in a way that became a guardian. Then we both got extremely confused: she blushed even down to her neck, so did I, and finally we fell silent, not knowing in the very least how to begin this conversation, which was to have been sincere and full of trustfulness.

Then she looked at me, I looked at her, and again red banners displayed themselves on our faces. We sat side by side like two dolls. It seemed to me that I felt the quickened beating of my own heart. Our position was unbearable. At moments I felt that some hand was taking me by the collar and casting me down at her feet, but a second hand held me by the hair and wouldn't let me go. Suddenly Hania stood up and said in a quick, confused voice:

"I'll have to go now. I've a lesson with Madame d'Yves at this hour. It's nearly eleven now."

We went towards the house by the way we had come. We walked as before in silence. I, as I had done before, cut off the heads of the flowers with my riding-switch, but this time she took no compassion on them.

Finely, indeed, had we returned to our former intercourse!

"Heavens, what's the matter with me?" thought I to myself when Hania left me alone. I was so deeply in love that my very hair stood up on end.

Meanwhile Father Ludwik came up and took me with him to the farm. On the way there he told me all kinds of things about our estate, things which didn't interest me in the least, though I pretended I was listening attentively.

My brother Casimir, who, taking advantage of the holidays, spent whole days out of doors in the stables, in the woods, on horseback with a gun or in a boat, just then was breaking in some young horses from the stud-farm. Seeing me and Father Ludwik, he galloped up to us on a chestnut horse, which plunged under him like mad, and bade us admire its form, its fire, its paces. Then he dismounted and went with us. We visited together the stables, the cowhouses, and the barns, and we were just thinking of going out into the fields when we were told that my father had come back, so we had to return to the house. My father welcomed me more warmly than ever before. Having heard about the examinations, he took me into his arms and declared that he would henceforth consider me as a grown man. And actually great changes did take place in his demeanour towards me. He treated me more confidentially and affectionately. He at once began to talk to me about the business of our estate, he confided to me that he intended to add to it by buying one of the neighbouring estates, and he asked me for my opinion on the matter. I guessed that he spoke of it on purpose to show me how seriously he looked upon my importance as a grown man, and the eldest son of the family. Moreover, I knew how truly he rejoiced in me and in my progress in my studies. His pride as a parent was extremely flattered by the certificate from my teachers which I had brought with me. I observed, too, that he was investigating my character, my way of thinking, my conception of honour, and that he was purposely putting certain questions to me, so as to get some knowledge of me from my answers. And it was evident that I passed this fatherly examination, for although my philosophic and social principles were very far from being the same as my father's, I didn't let that appear and, as regards our other ideas, we could not differ much. Hence my father's severe, lion-like face was bright as it had never before been. He showered presents on me, too, that day. He gave me a pair of pistols, those with which, not long ago, he had fought a duel with Mr. Zoll, and on which notches had been made to denote other duels which he had fought in his youth, when he was doing his military service. Then I got a magnificent horse of eastern blood and an old, ancestral sabre, with its hilt studded with precious stones, with a broad damascene blade, upon which a picture of the Blessed Virgin was engraved in gold, with the inscription: "Jesus! Mary!" This sabre was one of the most notable of our family heirlooms; and

besides that, the eternal object of my and Casimir's desires since long ago, for it cut iron like chips. My father in giving it to me drew it from its scabbard, made a pass with it a few times, so that it swished through the air and there was a gleam in the room; then he made a cross with it over my head, kissed the picture of the Blessed Virgin and, handing the sabre to me, said: "I give it into worthy hands! I did not shame it, do not you!" Then we fell into each other's arms, whilst Casimir eagerly seized the sabre. Though only a boy of fifteen, he was extraordinarily strong, and he began to make passes with it, the exactitude and the swiftness of which would not have shamed any experienced teacher of fencing. My father looked at him with satisfaction and said: "He'll be a bonny fencer, but you can do the same as he—can't you?"

"I can, father. I'd be a match for Casimir. Of all the colleagues with whom I learned to fence only one excelled me."

"And who was that?"

"Selim Mirza."

My father made a face.

"Oh, Mirza! But you must be stronger than he."

"Yes, and that's the one thing that enables me to keep even with him. But anyhow, I and Selim will never fight."

"Oh, all kinds of things happen," replied my father.

After dinner that day we were all sitting in the wide porch overhung with vines, whence we had a view of the immense courtyard and, further, of the shady avenue, planted with limes. Madame d'Yves was crocheting an altar cloth, my father and Father Ludwik were smoking pipes, and sipping coffee without milk. Casimir was walking up and down before the porch, following with his eyes the movements of swallows in the air, which he would have liked to shoot, but my father didn't allow it; while Hania and I were looking at the sketches I had brought with me, and thinking hardly at all of them. For me at least they only served to conceal from others my looks at Hania.

"Well, what do you think of Hania? Do you think she's got very ugly, Mr. Guardian?" asked my father, looking jokingly at the girl.

I began to look very diligently at the drawings, and replied from behind the paper:

"I wouldn't say, father, that she's got ugly, but she's grown and changed."

"Mr. Henryk's already been reproaching me with these changes," interrupted Hania casily.

I wondered at her daring and presence of mind. I wouldn't have mentioned those reproaches so freely.

"What matters it if she's got ugly or pretty?" said Father Ludwik. "Anyhow she learns quickly and well. Let Madame say how quickly she's learned French."

Here I must tell you that Father Ludwik, though a very well-educated man, didn't know French, and couldn't learn it, though he had spent twelve or thirteen years in our house with Madame d'Yves. And the poor soul had a weakness for French, and considered a knowledge of it to be an indispensable sign of higher education.

"I can't deny that Hania learns easily and likes learning," rejoined Madame d'Yves; "but still I must report her to you," she said, turning to me.

"Oh, what have I done now?" cried Hania, putting her hands beseechingly together.

"What have you done? You'll have to make your excuses yourself at once," replied Madame d'Yves. "Just imagine that the young lady, whenever she has a moment, snatches up a novel, and I have certain reasons for thinking that when she goes to bed, instead of putting out her light and going to sleep, she keeps on reading for hours on end."

"That's very bad for her; but anyhow, I know from another source that she imitates her teacher," said my father, who liked to argue with Madame d'Yves when he was in a good humour.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, but I'm forty-five," answered the Frenchwoman.

"There, I'd never have said so!" rejoined my father.

"You're unkind, sir."

"I don't know, but I only know that if Hania gets a novel from anywhere, it isn't from the library, for Father Ludwik has the key of the library. Hence the blame falls on the teacher."

Madame d'Yves, in fact, had read romances all her life, and as she was passionately fond of narrating them to any one, must surely have narrated them to Hania too, so that, in my father's half-joking words a certain amount of truth was hidden, which he purposely wanted to bring out.

"Look, all of you, someone's riding to our house," cried Casimir suddenly.

We all looked into the darkness of the lime avenue, and at the actual entrance to it, perhaps still a verst away, we saw a cloud of dust, which approached us with extraordinary speed.

"Who can it be? What speed!" observed my father, standing up. "Such dust that one can't distinguish anything."

Indeed, it was very hot; no rain had fallen for a fortnight, so clouds of white dust rose from the roads at every movement on them. We still looked for a moment in vain at the approaching cloud, which was now no farther than a few score paces from the courtyard, when suddenly from the cloud there emerged a horse's head with red, distended nostrils, with fiery eyes and flying mane. The white horse rushed at full gallop, its feet barely touching the ground, and upon it, bending over its neck in the Tartar manner, was none other than my friend Selim.

"Selim's coming, Selim!" cried Casimir.

"What's the fool at? The gate's shut!" shouted I, jumping up.

There was no time now to open the gate, for none could have run to it in time; meanwhile Selim rushed like mad, recklessly, and it was almost certain that he would fall on the rails of the gate, which were more than six feet high and pointed at the top.

"Heaven have mercy upon him!" cried Father Ludwik.

"The gate, Selim, the gate!" I cried like one possessed, waving my handkerchief and running as hard as I could across the courtyard.

Suddenly Selim, at about five paces from the gate, straightened himself in the saddle, measured the gate-rails with a look swift as lightning. . . . Then I heard a cry from the women, who were sitting in the porch, a violent pounding of hoofs . . . the horse reared, pawed the air with its fore feet and, at full gallop, jumped over the rails, not pausing for even a moment.

It was only before the porch that Selim brought him to a standstill, with such impetus that his hoofs dug into the earth, and, snatching his cap from his head, he began to wave it like a banner and to cry:

"How are you, dear, good ladies and gentlemen? My respects to your honour!" he called, bowing to my father. "My respects to you, dear Father Ludwik, to Madame d'Yves, to Miss Hania! We're together again. Vivat! Vivat!"

So saying he leaped from his horse and, throwing the reins to Franek, who at this moment ran out of the hall, he began to hug my father and the priest, and to kiss the ladies' hands.

Madame d'Yves and Hania were pale with fright, but just for that reason they welcomed Selim, as one who had had an escape, and Father Ludwik said:

"Oh, you madman, you madman, what a fright you gave us! We thought it was all over with you."

"And pray why was that?"

"Why, that gate. How could you rush blindly like that?"

"Blindly? But I knew the gate was shut. Oho! I have my excellent Tartar eyes."

"And you weren't afraid to jump?"

Selim burst out laughing.

"No, not at all, Father Ludwik. But anyhow, it was my horse's merit, not mine."

"*Voilà un brave garçon!*" said Madame d'Yves.

"Not everybody would have dared to do that," added Hania.

"You mean," I rejoined, "that not every horse would have jumped over, for there are other people who would do it."

Hania gave me a long look.

"I shouldn't advise you to try."

Then she looked at Selim, and her look expressed admiration, for really, putting aside the Tartar's audacious deed, which was one of those hazards which always please women, you should have seen how he looked at that moment. His lovely black hair fell on his brow, his cheeks were flushed with the swift movement, his eyes shining, merriment and joy beaming from them.

As he stood at that moment by Hania, looking at her with curiosity in his eyes, no artist could have dreamt of a more beautiful pair.

As for me, I was extremely hurt by her words. It seemed to me that she had said those words, "I shouldn't advise you to try," in a voice in which there was a tone of irony. I looked questioningly at my father, who a moment before had been looking at Selim's horse. I knew his fatherly pride, I knew that he was envious as often as any one excelled me in anything, and he had long been vexed that Selim did; so I reckoned on his not opposing me if I wanted to show that I was no worse rider than Selim.

"That horse really does jump bravely," said I.

"But that devil sits it bravely too," he growled back. "And you—could you do the same?"

"Hania doubts it," I rejoined, with a certain bitterness.

"May I try?"

My father hesitated, glanced at the fence, at the horse, at me, and said:

"Leave it alone!"

"Of course!" I cried, aggrieved; "it's better for me to pass for an old woman as compared with Selim."

"Henryk, what nonsense you're talking!" cried Selim, putting his arm round my neck.

"Jump, jump, lad; and acquit yourself well!" said my father, whose pride was hurt.

"Bring me a horse!" I cried to Franek, who was slowly leading the tired riding-horse from the courtyard.

Hania jumped up suddenly.

"Mr. Henryk," she cried, "it's I that am the cause of your trying this. I won't have it, I won't have it! You won't do it! . . . For my sake!"

And so saying she looked into my eyes as if she wanted to say with a look all she couldn't express in words.

Oh, I would then have given my last drop of blood for that look! But I couldn't and I wouldn't draw back. My hurt pride was at that moment stronger than anything else, so I controlled myself and answered drily:

"You mistake, Hania, if you think that you're the cause of this. I'll jump for my own pleasure."

So saying, in spite of the protests of everybody (except my father), I mounted and rode down the lime avenue at a trot. Franek opened the gate and shut it behind me immediately. There was bitterness in my soul, and I should have jumped over that fence, even had it been twice as high. Having ridden about three hundred paces, I turned the horse round and set him cantering, changing the canter at once into a gallop.

Suddenly I perceived that the saddle was shaking under me.

One of two things had happened. Either the girth had broken during the previous jump, or Franek had loosened it to rest the horse, and from stupidity or perhaps forgetfulness hadn't told me of it in time.

Now already it was too late. The horse was approaching the gate at full gallop, and I didn't want to pull it in now. "If I'm killed I'm killed!" thought I to myself. A kind of despair came over me. I pressed the horse's sides convulsively, the wind whistled in my ears. Suddenly the gate-rails gleamed close before me. I waved my riding-switch, felt myself raised into the air, a shout from the porch sounded in my ears, it got dark before my eyes and . . . after a moment I came to after my faint, on the grass.

I jumped to my feet.

"What happened?" I cried. "I fell off, did I? Fainted?"

Round me stood my father, Father Ludwik, Selim, Casimir, Madame d'Yves, and Hania, who was as white as a sheet and had tears in her eyes.

"What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you?" came from all sides.

"Nothing at all. . . . I fell off, but it wasn't my fault. The girth was broken."

And really after that momentary faint I felt quite well, except that I was a little out of breath. My father began to touch my arms, legs, and back.

"Does it hurt?" he kept asking.

"No, I'm quite all right."

Very soon I recovered my breath. I was only angry, for it seemed to me that I appeared ridiculous. And indeed I must have looked ridiculous. Falling from my horse, I had been carried by the impetus right across the avenue that ran round the grass plot, and had fallen on the grass, as a result of which the elbows and knees of my light-coloured clothing were coloured green, and my clothes and hair were in disorder. But, in spite of all that, that mischance did me for the moment a certain service. It was this. A moment before everybody in our circle had been preoccupied with Selim, he being a guest and a guest newly arrived; now I, though at the expense of my elbows and knees, had taken the palm from him. Hania, who kept on ascribing to herself, and, truth to tell, correctly, this hazardous attempt, which might have ended so ill, tried to make up to me by her goodness and sweetness for her want of caution. Under the influence of this I soon regained my gaiety, which imparted itself to the whole company, so terrified a moment before. We enjoyed ourselves immensely; tea was served, at which Hania took the part of the lady of the house, and then we went out into the garden. In the garden Selim romped like a little child; he laughed, he played pranks, and Hania seconded him with her whole heart. At last Selim said:

"Oh, what fun we three will have now!"

"I'm curious to know," said Hania, "which of us is the merriest."

"I am, I'm sure," he replied.

"Or perhaps I? Oh, I'm naturally very merry."

"But Henryk's the least merry," added Selim. "He's naturally serious and rather melancholy. If he'd lived in the

Middle Ages he 'd have become a knight-errant or a troubadour, only that, of course, he can't sing! But we," he added, "are made for each other."

"I don't agree to that," said I. "I think opposite temperaments go best together, for then one has the qualities the other lacks."

"Thank you," rejoined Selim. "Let's suppose that you naturally like to cry and Miss Hania to laugh. Now, if you should marry . . ."

"Selim!"

Selim looked at me and began to laugh

"What's all this, young man? Ha ha! And do you remember Cicero's words in *Pro Archia*? '*Commovere videtur juvenis*,' which, translated, means: 'the youth seems to be confused.' But it means nothing, for you blush famously for no reason at all. Miss Hania, he blushes famously, and now he's doing it for himself and you too."

"Selim!"

"Nothing, nothing. I return to the hypothesis. So you, Mr. Tearful, and you, Miss Laughter, get married, and this is what will happen: he'll begin to cry and you'll begin to laugh. You'll never understand each other. You'll never agree, but always differ, and what sort of well-matched natures are you? Oh, with me it'd be quite different. We should simply laugh all our lives long, and there's an end of it."

"Oh, what things you say!" replied Hania.

But indeed they both of them began to laugh as hard as they could.

As for me I hadn't the least desire to laugh. Selim didn't know a bit what a wrong he did me, impressing on Hania that difference between her disposition and mine. I was as angry as I could be, and therefore I sneered at Selim.

"You've a strange opinion of me, and it surprises me the more as you've rather a weakness for melancholy people."

"I?" he said, with unfeigned amazement.

"Yes. I could remind you of a certain little window, some fuchsias in it, and a little face among the fuchsias. I give you my word I don't know any other face as melancholy."

Hania began to clap her hands.

"Oho! I'm finding out something new!" she cried, laughing. "Nice conduct, Mr. Selim. Nice conduct!"

I thought that Selim would get confused and lose his good spirits, but he only said:

"Henryk!"

"What?"

"Do you know what's done to people who have too long tongues?"

And he started laughing again.

But Hania began to tease him and press him to tell her the name of his chosen one. Without much consideration he said "Josey!" But if he had minded the whole thing, he would have paid dearly for his frankness, for Hania henceforward gave him no peace the whole of the rest of the day, till evening.

"Is she pretty?" she asked.

"Fairly."

"What kind of hair and eyes has she?"

"Pretty, but not the kind I like best."

"And what kind do you like best?"

"Fair hair and eyes, by your favour, blue, like the ones I'm looking at now."

"Oo! Mr. Selim!"

And Hania frowned, but Selim folded his hands, made up to her, and began to say, with his own incomparable loveliness in his eyes:

"Miss Hania! Don't get angry! What harm has the poor Tartar done you? Don't get angry! Smile!"

Hania looked at him, and as she looked the little cloud disappeared from her brow. He just simply charmed her. A little smile began to wander round the corners of her mouth, her eyes brightened, her little face became radiant, and at last she replied in a soft, mild voice:

"All right, I won't get angry. But please be good!"

"I will, as I love Mahomet; I will!"

"And do you love your Mahomet very much?"

"As much as dogs love a beggar."

And they began to laugh anew.

"Oh, and now tell me, sir," Hania began again, "with whom Mr. Henryk's in love. I asked him but he wouldn't tell me."

"Henryk? Do you know what?" Here Selim glanced slyly at me. "Most likely he's not in love with any one yet, but he will be—Oho! I know quite well with whom. And as for me . . ."

"As for you?" asked Hania, striving to cover her confusion.

"I'd be the same; but anyhow . . . Just wait, maybe he's even in love already."

"For goodness' sake, Selim, leave it alone!"

"My dear, good fellow!" said Selim, hugging me round the neck. "Ah, if you only knew how good he is!"

"Oh, that I know," rejoined Hania. "I remember how good he was to me after my granddad's death."

A little cloud of sadness floated in among us.

"I tell you," said Selim, desirous of turning the conversation on to another subject—"I tell you that when we and our crammer got drunk together after the university entrance exam. . . ."

"Got drunk?"

"Yes! Oh, that's a kind of custom which one can't escape. So, when we'd got drunk, I, being, you see, a rattle-headed fellow, proposed your health; but Henryk jumped up on the spot: 'How dare you mention Hania's name in such a place?' says he to me. For 'twas just a common wine-shop. It was a wonder we didn't fight. But he wouldn't let you be treated lightly, that he wouldn't."

Hania stretched out her hand to me.

"Mr. Henryk! How good you are!"

"All right," I replied, won by Selim's words. "But still tell me yourself, Hania, isn't Selim just as good to tell things like that?"

"Yes, of course," replied Hania. "One of you is as good as the other."

"You shall be our queen," cried Selim eagerly.

"Gentlemen! Hania! Supper's ready," came the voice of Madame d'Yves from the garden veranda.

We went in to supper, all three of us, in the best of humours. The table was set close to the veranda; candles twinkled, enclosed in glass shades, and a swarm of moths, whirling about the light, knocked against the glass walls of the shades; the wild vine leaves rustled, stirred by the warm night wind, and a great, golden moon rolled out from behind the poplars. That last conversation between myself, Hania, and Selim had just put us in a strangely gentle and friendly mood. Such a quiet and peaceful evening as this was influenced our elders too. The faces of my father and Father Ludwik were unclouded like the sky.

After supper Madame d'Yves began to play patience, and my

father got into the best of humours, telling us of former times, which was always a sign of good humour with him.

"I remember once," he said, "we were camped near a village in the Krasnostaw district; the night, I recollect, was dark as far as one could see all around." Here he drew in smoke from his pipe, and let it out over the candle. "We were as tired as Jewish nags. Well, we stood there, and suddenly . . ."

And here followed a tale of strange and most marvellous happenings. Father Ludwik, though he had heard it more than once before, stopped smoking, listened with increasing attention, put on his spectacles and, nodding his head, kept repeating: "Ahem!" or exclaiming: "Jesus! Mary! and what happened then?" Selim and I, leaning on each other's shoulders, our eyes fixed upon my father, greedily followed his words; but the impression they made was pictured on no face so markedly as on Selim's. His eyes glowed like red-hot coals; his face was flushed; his eastern nature came to the surface like oil. He could scarcely keep his seat. Madame d'Yves, looking at him, smiled, and directed Hania's attention to him, and then they both began to observe him, for that face, like a mirror, or a sheet of water, reflected everything that came near it.

To-day, when I remember evenings like that, I can't resist my emotion. How many waves on the water and clouds on the sky have passed since then, and yet winged memory perpetually brings up pictures like that before my eyes—pictures of a country manor-house, of a quiet, summer night, and of a harmonious, loving, happy family; in them the old, grey veteran tells of his experiences in the past; and the eyes of the young folks sparkle, and there is one face like a wild flower. . . . Oh, there has been many a wave on the water, many a cloud on the sky since then!

Meanwhile ten o'clock struck. Selim jumped up, for he had orders to return home for the night. We decided that we all would set him on his way, accompanying him to the cross that stood at the end of the lime avenue, near the second gate, and that I should go with him yet farther on horseback, as far as beyond the meadows. So we all set off, except Casimir, who had fallen sound asleep.

I, Hania, and Selim went on in advance, Selim and I leading our horses by the reins, Hania in the middle between us. Our three elders walked behind us. It was dark in the avenue; only the moon, penetrating the thick foliage, dappled the dark way with spots of silver.

"Let's sing something," said Selim. "Some nice, old song, the one about Philon, for instance."

"Nobody sings that now," rejoined Hania; "I know another: 'Oh, in autumn, in autumn, the leaf on the tree doth wither!'"

At last they agreed that we should first sing about Philon, which, too, Father Ludwik and my father liked very much, for it reminded them of former times, and then: "Oh, in autumn, in autumn!" Hania laid a white hand on the mane of Selim's horse, and they began to sing:

Now the moon has set, the dogs are asleep,
One claps by the forest—I hear it!
'Tis my Philon dear, who our tryst doth keep
At our maple tree—standing near it.

When they ended the voices of our elders sounded out of the darkness: "Bravo! Bravo! Sing something else!" I sang seconds as well as I could, but I couldn't sing well, and Hania and Selim had lovely voices, but especially Selim. Sometimes when I sang too much out of tune they both laughed at me.

Then they sang a few more songs, during which I thought to myself: "Why does that Hania keep her hand on Selim's horse's mane, and not on my horse's?" She liked that horse particularly. From time to time she pressed close to his neck or, patting it with her hand, repeated: "My little horse, mine!" and the gentle creature snorted and extended its open, snorting nostrils towards her hand as if seeking sugar. All this saddened me again, and I looked at nothing but at that hand, which still rested upon the mane.

Meanwhile we reached the cross, near which the lime avenue ended. Selim began to bid good night to every one, to kiss Madame d'Yves's hand, and he would have kissed Hania's too, but she wouldn't let him, looking fearfully at me. But when Selim had already mounted she approached him and began to converse with him. By the moonlight, which there was not veiled by the limes, I saw her eyes raised towards Selim and the sweet expression on her face.

"Don't forget Mr. Henryk!" she said to him. "We'll always enjoy ourselves and sing together, and now good night!"

So saying, she gave him her hand, then our elders and she turned back home, while Selim and I rode on in the direction of the meadows.

We rode for a while in silence along an open, treeless road. Around us it was so light that one could have counted the little

needles on the low juniper bushes that grew by the wayside. Only the horses snorted now and again, or stirrup clinked against stirrup. I looked at Selim: he was lost in thought, and his eyes roved unseeingly from one thing to another in the dark recesses of the night. I had an irresistible desire to speak of Hania; I felt the need of opening my mind to someone on all the day's impressions, to talk over her every little word, but I couldn't for the life of me begin that conversation with Selim. But Selim began it first, for suddenly, without any particular reason, he bent over towards me and, clasping me round the neck, kissed me on the cheek and cried:

"Oh, Henryk dear! how lovely and sweet your Hania is! Josey can go to the devil for all I care!"

That cry of his froze me, like a sudden waft of winter wind. I made no reply, but disengaged Selim's hands from my neck and, pushing him coldly away, rode on in silence. I saw that he got very confused and fell silent also, and after a moment, turning to me, he said:

"Are you angry about anything?"

"You're a child!"

"Perhaps you're jealous?"

I stopped my horse.

"Good night, Selim!"

It was evident that he didn't want to take leave of me yet, but he at once extended his hand for me to clasp it. Then he opened his mouth as if he wanted to say something, but I quickly turned my horse round and cantered towards home.

"Good night!" called Selim. He stood still a moment on the spot, then rode slowly away towards his home.

Slackening my pace I rode at a trot. It was a lovely night, tranquil and warm; the meadows, covered with dew, looked like extensive lakes; from the meadows there reached me the voice of the landrail; a bittern called in the reeds far off. I looked up at the starry immensities; I wanted to pray and to weep.

Suddenly I heard the beating of a horse's hoofs behind me. I looked round: it was Selim. He had overtaken me, come level with me and, barring my way, said, in a moved voice:

"Henryk, I turned back because there's something wrong with you. At first I thought: 'If he's angry, let him be angry,' and then I was sorry for you. I couldn't bear it. Tell me, what's up with you? Perhaps I talked to Hania too much? Perhaps you love her? Henryk!"

Tears choked me, and for the moment I couldn't answer. But if I had followed my first inspiration and thrown myself into the good fellow's arms and cried my fill in them and avowed everything! Ah, I mentioned before that as often in my life as I have come in contact with an expression of affectionate emotion and have myself affectionately opened my heart, an unrestrained, defiant pride, which I have had to break as a rock is broken with a pick-axe, froze my heart again and bound the words upon my lips. How much of my happiness in life was spoiled by that pride! How often I regretted it later on! And yet, at the first moment I couldn't resist it.

Selim had said: "I was sorry for you!" and so he pitied me; even that was enough to shut my lips. So I kept silence, and he looked at me with his angelic eyes and spoke in a tone of repentance and humility.

"Henryk, perhaps you love her? I, you see, only took a fancy to her, and that's an end of it. If you like, I won't say another word to her. Tell me, perhaps you love her already? Why are you offended with me?"

"I'm not in love, and I'm not offended with you. I don't feel quite well. I fell off the horse and knocked myself about. I'm not in love at all, only I fell off the horse. Good night!"

"Henryk! Henryk!"

"I repeat that I fell off the horse."

We parted again. Selim kissed me at parting and rode off more tranquil, for it was really likely that the fall had affected me thus. And I rode alone, with a heavy heart, with a kind of deep grief within me, with tears choking me: I was moved by Selim's goodness, angry with myself, cursing myself inwardly for repulsing him. I set the horse to a gallop and was soon before the house.

The drawing-room windows were lit up; there came through them a sound of piano-playing. I gave the horse into Franek's charge and entered the room. It was Hania playing a song I didn't know; she went on, playing wrong notes here and there, with the complete self-confidence of the dilettante, for she hadn't long begun to learn, but more than well enough to delight my soul, which was much more in love than musical. When I entered she smiled to me without stopping her playing, and I flung myself into an arm-chair standing opposite, and began to gaze at her

Through the music-rest her quiet, serene brow and regularly

outlined eyebrows were visible. Her eyelids were lowered, for she was looking at her fingers. She played still for a short time and then stopped, and, raising her eyes to look at me, said in a caressing, soft voice:

"Mr. Henryk!"

"What, Hania?"

"I wanted to ask you something. Oh, yes! Did you invite Mr. Selim to come to-morrow?"

"No. Father wants us to go to Ustrzyca to-morrow, for a packet for Mrs. Ustrzycka has come from my mother."

Hania fell silent and struck a few soft chords, but she obviously did so mechanically, thinking of something else, for after a moment she raised her eyes to look at me again.

"Mr. Henryk!"

"What, Hania?"

"I wanted to ask you something. . . . Oh, yes! Is that Josey in Warsaw very pretty?"

Ah, now that was too much! Anger, mingled with bitterness, filled my heart to bursting. Quickly I approached the piano, and my lips shook as I replied:

"No prettier than you. Be easy! You can holdly try your charms on Selim."

At that Hania stood up from the piano-stool, and a hot, offended blush flooded her cheeks.

"Mr. Henryk, what are you saying?"

"Just what you intend to do."

So saying, I seized my hat, bowed to her, and left the room.

VII

IT is easy to guess what sort of a night I spent after that whole day of troubles. Lying down in bed, I first of all asked myself what had happened, and why I had been making such scenes all day. The answer was easy to give: Nothing had happened; that is, I could reproach neither Selim nor Hania with anything which could not be explained either by the courtesy which binds all alike, or by curiosity or a mutual liking. That Hania liked Selim, and he her, was more than certain; but what right had I to rage because of that and to disturb every one's peace? So it wasn't their fault, but mine! This thought should have calmed me, but it did the opposite. However much I explained to myself their relation to one another;

however much I repeated that nothing had really happened; however much I recognized that I had done wrong in having been more than once disagreeable to both of them, I yet felt as if some indefinable menace hung over me in the future; but the fact that that menace was indefinable, that it could not be formulated in a reproach to Mirza or Hania, made it the more painful to me. Besides, I thought furthermore, that though I had no right to reproach them with anything, I had a right to be uneasy. All these were subtleties, almost intangible things, amidst which my mind, hitherto simple, tangled and tormented itself, as amid darkness and intricate paths. I felt just simply tired and worn out, as if after a long journey, and besides this, one thought, the worst and most painful, came back into my head continually—that I myself, clearly I, by my jealousy and awkwardness, had fatally impelled these two towards each other. Oh, I had even then attained to that much consciousness of the state of things, though I had no experience! One divines things of this kind. What was more, I knew I should walk among these wandering paths, not whither I wanted, but whither I was impelled by emotions and other, often momentary and insignificant, circumstances, which are yet sometimes important, and on which happiness often depends. As for me, I was very unhappy, and although these griefs of mine might appear trifling to any one, yet I can tell you that the greatness of every misfortune does not depend upon what it is intrinsically, but on how one feels it.

And yet, nothing had happened, nothing had happened yet! Lying in bed I repeated these words to myself, till gradually my thoughts began to get confused, to be scattered, and to fall into the usual disorder induced by drowsiness. Various inapposite elements began to suggest themselves under its influence. My father's stories, the characters and events of those stories, connected themselves with the present time, with Selim, with Hania, and with my love. Perhaps I was a little feverish, the more so that I had knocked myself about. The wick of the burnt-out candle fell down suddenly in the candlestick; it got dark, then again a blue flame leaped up, it was followed by a lesser one, and a yet lesser one, till finally the dying light gleamed brightly yet once more and went out. It must have been already late. Cocks were crowing outside the shutters. I slept heavily and unhealthily, and did not awake for a long time.

Next day it appeared that I had overslept the breakfast hour and the opportunity of seeing Hania before dinner-time, for she had lessons with Madame d'Yves till two o'clock. But, on the other hand, having had my sleep out, I had taken heart and the world did not look so dark to me. I would be kind to Hania, courteous, and thus would make up to her for my yesterday's bad temper, I thought. But I hadn't foreseen one circumstance, namely, that not only had my last words annoyed Hania, but that they had offended her too. When Hania came in with Madame d'Yves to dinner, I ran briskly to meet her, and suddenly, as if somebody had thrown water over me, retreated into myself again, together with my cordiality, not because I wanted to do so, but because I was repulsed. Hania said good morning to me very politely, but so coldly that all desire to show her any affection left me. Then she sat down beside Madame d'Yves, and all through dinner appeared not to be aware any more of my existence. I confess that at that moment that existence of mine seemed to me to be so vain and lamentable that if any one had given me three farthings for it I should have told him that he had paid too much. But what was I to do? There awoke within me the will to resist, and I decided to pay Hania back in the same coin. It was a strange part to take with a person I loved above everything. I might with truth say: "The mouth blasphemeth though the heart weepeth!" All through dinner we did not speak to one another directly, but through the medium of a third person. When Hania, for instance, said that it would rain towards evening, she addressed the remark to Madame d'Yves, to which I, speaking also to Madame d'Yves and not to Hania, replied that it would not rain. This mutual teasing had even a certain irritating charm for me. "I'm curious, my young lady, how we shall behave to each other at Ustrzyca," I thought within myself. I would purposely at Ustrzyca ask her something before strangers, and she would have, of course, to reply, and so the ice would break. I promised myself a great deal from this visit to Ustrzyca. Madame d'Yves was, indeed, to go with us, but what harm would that do me? Meanwhile, I was much more concerned that none of those present at the table should notice that we were angry with one another. "If anybody notices it," I thought, "and asks if we are angry with one another, everything will be disclosed and the cat will be out of the bag." At the mere thought of that my face flushed and fear oppressed

my heart. Strange to say, I perceived that Hania was much less afraid of that than I; further, that she saw my fear and that she exulted in it. Then again, I felt myself humbled by this, but there **was** nothing to be done. Ustrzyca awaited me, so I caught on to the thought of it as a drowning man will to a straw.

But obviously Hania thought of it, for after dinner, when she brought my father his black coffee, she kissed his hand and said:

"Will you permit me not to go to Ustrzyca, sir?"

"Oh, how horrid, how horrid she is, that beloved Hania!" thought I within myself.

But my father, who was a little deaf, did not quite hear at first and, kissing the girl on the forehead, said:

"What is it you want, little woman?"

"I want to ask you for one thing."

"What is it?"

"Will you permit me not to go to Ustrzyca?"

"What now? Are you ill?"

If she said she was ill, thought I again, all was over, and the more so, as my father was in a good humour.

But Hania never lied, even innocently, so, instead of attributing her wish not to go to a headache, she replied:

"No, I'm well, but I don't want to go."

"Oh well, in that case, you shall go to Ustrzyca, for you ought to go there."

Hania curtsied and, not saying a word, went away. As for me, I was delighted, and how I should have liked to make a long nose at Hania!

But after a moment, when I was alone with my father, I asked him why he had ordered her to go.

"I want our neighbours to get accustomed to see in her our kinswoman. Hania, going to Ustrzyca, does so, in a way, in the name of your mother. Do you understand?"

Not only did I understand, but I wanted to kiss my kind father for that thought.

We were to start at five o'clock. Hania and Madame d'Yves were meanwhile dressing themselves upstairs, and I gave orders to have horses harnessed to a light chaise for two persons, for I myself intended to ride. It was seven miles and a half to Ustrzyca, so, as the weather was beautiful, we had a very pleasant journey before us. When Hania came downstairs, dressed, it is true, in black, but carefully and even elegantly,

for my father wished it to be so, I couldn't take my eyes off her. She looked so lovely, that I at once felt my heart soften and my desire to resist and my artificial coolness fled off beyond the hills and far away. But my queen passed me by in a truly queenly manner, not even looking at me, although I, too, had freshened myself up as well as I could. I might say, as a parenthesis, that she was a little put out, for she really did not want to go, though that was not because she wanted to tease me, but for other, more justifiable reasons, as I found later.

At the stroke of five I mounted my horse, my ladies got into the chaise, and we started off together. On the way I kept on Hania's side, for I wanted by every means in my power to call her attention to myself. She just looked once at me, when my horse reared, measured me with a quiet look from head to foot; I wouldn't even swear that she didn't smile slightly, which for the moment encouraged me, but immediately afterwards she turned to Madame d'Yves and began to talk to her in such a way that I couldn't intervene in the conversation.

At last we reached Ustrzyca, where we found Selim. Mrs. Ustrzycka was not at home, only Mr. Ustrzycki, two governesses, a Frenchwoman and a German, and two young ladies, the elder of whom, Lola, was the same age as Hania, a pretty and rather coquettish girl, with chestnut hair, and the younger, Marynia, was still a child. The ladies, after the first greetings, immediately betook themselves to the garden for strawberries, but Mr. Ustrzycki took Selim and me with him to show us his new weapons and new dogs for boar-hunting, which he had procured, at great expense, from as far off as Wroclaw. I have already mentioned that Mr. Ustrzycki was the most zealous huntsman in the whole neighbourhood, and in addition a very worthy man, good-natured, and as obliging, as he was rich. He had only one failing, which made him boring to me, that is, he was continually laughing, and every few words he smacked his stomach with his hands, and repeated: "A farce, my dear sir! What's it called? What?" For this reason he was called "Neighbour Farce," or "Neighbour What's-it-called."

This Neighbour Farce, then, conducted us to the kennels, not considering that probably a hundred times over we should have preferred to be with the young ladies in the garden. For some time we listened patiently to his tales, until at last I remembered that I had something to tell Madame d'Yves, and Selim simply said:

"That's all very well, sir. The dogs are very fine, but what have we to do with them, when we should like much better to go to the young ladies?"

Mr. Ustrzycki hit his stomach with his hands.

"Oh, a farce, my dear sir! What's it called? What? Well, then, go and I'll go with you."

And we went. But very soon it became evident that I hadn't any reason to have wished so much to go to the ladies. Hania, who rather kept aside from her woman companions, did not cease to slight me, and, perhaps purposely, occupied herself with Selim; and it fell to me to entertain Miss Lola. What I talked to Miss Lola about, how I managed not to talk nonsense, and how I replied to her courteous questions, I know not, for I was watching Selim and Hania all the while, straining my ears to hear what they were talking about, watching their looks and movements. Selim did not perceive this, but Hania did, and purposely lowered her voice, or looked with a certain coquettishness at her companion, who let himself be carried away by these favours. "Just you wait, Hania!" thought I to myself. "You're playing me tricks, I'll do the same to you." With this thought in my mind, I turned to my companion. I forgot to say that Miss Lola had a very special weakness for me, and showed it to me more than distinctly. So I began to be nice to her, I joked and smiled, though I really wanted to cry, and Lola looked at me beaming with her liquid, dark-blue eyes and began to get into a love-making mood.

Ah, if she had only known how I hated her at that moment! And yet, I was so absorbed in my part that I even did an abominable thing. When Lola, in the course of conversation, made a spiteful remark about Selim and Hania, I, though I was shaking with anger at it, did not reply to it as I should have, but smiled rather foolishly and let it pass in silence. We walked about like that for an hour, then tea was served under a weeping chestnut-tree, whose branches, lowering their tips to the ground, formed, as it were, a green cupola above our heads. It was only now that I comprehended that it was not only on account of me that Hania did not want to go to Ustrzyca, but that she had her more cogent reasons.

The facts were simply as follows: Madame d'Yves, who was descended from an old French family of gentle blood, and, moreover, was better educated than the other governesses, considered herself to be something better than the French-

woman, and, more particularly, than the Fräulein at Ustrzyca; but they, in their turn, considered themselves to be above Hania, whose grandfather had been a serving-man. But Madame d'Yves, who had good manners, did not show her thoughts, while they slighted Hania to the point of incivility. It was a matter of ordinary feminine spite and petty pride, but I couldn't allow my dear little Hania, who was, moreover, of more value than every one at Ustrzyca put together, to be their victim. Hania bore these slights with a tact and amiability that did honour to her character, but they hurt her. When Mrs. Ustrzycka was there, nothing of the kind took place, but just then the two governesses took advantage of the opportunity offered by her absence. As soon as ever Selim sat down by Hania's side, whispers and pin-pricks began, in which, by degrees, Miss Lola also, envying Hania her beauty, took her share. I repelled these taunts sharply several times, perhaps too sharply, but soon Selim, against my will, replaced me. I saw that the lightning of anger flashed across his brows, but soon he controlled himself, and calmly turned a scornful gaze on the governesses. He was smart, witty and flippant, as were few of his age, and soon he had so confounded them that they didn't know what to do with themselves. Madame d'Yves, with her dignity, helped him as well as I, who, for the matter of that, would have liked to give the two foreign women a sound beating. Miss Lola, not wishing to alienate me from herself, came over to our side, too, and, although insincerely, began to show Hania twice the politeness she usually did. In a word, our triumph was complete; unfortunately, however, and greatly to my vexation, the chief merit was, this time, Selim's. Hania, who, in spite of all her tact, had only with an effort restrained the tears that forced their way to her eyes, began to look upon Selim as her saviour, with gratitude and adoration. So when we stood up from the table and resumed our walk in couples about the garden, I heard how Hania whispered, bending towards Selim:

"Mr. Selim! I'm so . . ."

And she broke off suddenly, for she was afraid of bursting out crying, and, in spite of her will, her emotion got the upper hand of her.

"Don't let's speak of it, Miss Hania. Don't pay any attention to it. . . . Don't let it vex you."

"Well, you see, Mr. Selim, how hard it is for me to speak of it. But I wanted to thank you."

"What for, Miss Hania, what for? I can't bear to see tears in your eyes. I would willingly do for you . . ."

And now in his turn he did not finish, for he couldn't find a word, and perhaps he perceived in time that he had allowed himself to be too much carried away by the feelings of which his heart was full; so, confused, he only turned his head aside so that his emotion should not be seen, and fell silent.

Hania looked upon him with eyes that her tears made brilliant, and I, at this juncture, was not curious to see what happened.

I loved Hania with the whole strength of my young heart, I adored her; I loved her as those in Heaven love; I loved her form, her eyes, every hair of her head, the sound of her voice; I loved every frock of hers, the air she breathed, and that love had penetrated me through and through, and was not only in my heart but in all my being: I lived only in it and through it, it flowed through my veins like blood, it emanated from me like heat. For others something besides love may exist, for me the whole world existed in it, and nothing outside it. I was blind, deaf, and stupid to the world, for my mind and senses were engaged with that one emotion alone. I felt that I was flaming like a torch that is lit, that that flame was consuming me and that I was perishing, dying. What was that love? A great voice, a great calling of one soul to another: "My adored one, my sacred one, my beloved, listen to me!" So I was not curious any more to know what had happened, for I had comprehended that it was not to me, not to me that Hania had responded to that loving request. Among indifferent folk, a man desirous of being loved walks as in a wood, and shouts and calls as one does in a wood, waiting to hear if any friendly voice answers his calling; so for that reason, too, I asked no more what had happened, for by reason of my own love and my own vain calling, I foreboded, I heard, two voices in loving harmony: Selim's and Hania's. They called each other with the voices of their hearts, they called each other, to my misfortune, themselves not knowing it. One was, as it were, the forest echo of the other, and one followed the other as echo follows voice. And what could I do against that inevitable fate, which they might call happiness, but I misfortune? What could I do against that order of nature, that fatal logic of things? How could I win Hania's heart when some invincible force inclined it in another direction?

I separated from the company and sat down on a garden seat, and thoughts like these rushed through my head like a startled flock of birds. A frenzy of suffering and despair possessed me. I felt that, amid my family, among hearts that wished me well, I yet was lonely. The whole world seemed to me so empty, so desolate, the heavens above me so indifferent to human wrongs, that, in spite of myself, one thought prevailed within me over others, and swallowed up all others and covered them with its gloomy quiet; and its name was death. And then: exit from that vicious circle and the end of sufferings and the solution of that whole sad comedy and the severing of all painful bonds that weighed down the soul, and rest after torment; oh, that rest, which I so greatly desired, a dark rest, the rest of annihilation, but quiet, eternal!

I was as a man overpowered by tears, suffering, and sleep. "I must sleep! sleep!" I thought to myself. "At any price—even at the price of life." But then from the immense, quiet blue of the sky, whither my former childhood's faith had flown, one thought flew down like a bird and alighted on my brain. This was contained in the brief words:

"And if?"

That commenced a new train of thought, in which I inevitably got entangled. Oh, I suffered greatly, and from that neighbouring walk over there gay words reached me, soft, broken expressions of those in converse there. The flowers smelt sweet about me, the birds chirped drowsily on the trees; above me hung the clear sky, flushed with sunset: everything was quiet, happy, and I alone was in pain and with clenched teeth, amid all that luxuriant life, desired to die.

Suddenly I quivered: a woman's frock rustled before me.

I looked: it was Miss Lola. She was quiet and gentle, and she looked sympathetically, nay, perchance more than sympathetically, at me. Amid the splendours of evening and the shadows cast by the trees, she seemed to me to be pale. Her luxuriant plaits, disordered as if by chance, fell over her shoulders.

At that moment I felt no hatred for her. "Oh, only pitiful soul!" thought I. "Comest thou to comfort me?"

"Mr. Henryk, you seem to be sad. . . Perhaps you're ill?"

"Oh, yes, I'm ill," I cried passionately, and, seizing her hand, placed it on my burning forehead, then kissed it violently and ran away.

"Mr. Henryk!" she called after me, in a low voice.

And simultaneously Selim and Hania appeared at the turn of the walk. They both saw my outburst: they saw me kissing Lola's hand, and pressing it to my brow; they both saw it, so they smiled and exchanged glances as if saying one to the other: "We understand what that means."

But meantime it was time to start for home. Selim had, just beyond the gate, to take another direction; I feared, however, that he would want to accompany us, so I hastily mounted my horse and said that it was already late, that it was time for Selim and for us to go. When saying good-bye I had a strangely warm handclasp from Miss Lola, to which I did not respond, and we started.

Selim turned off just beyond the gate, but for the first time he kissed Hania's hand when he bade her good night, and she did not forbid him.

She had somehow ceased to slight me. She was in too gentle a mood to remember her anger of the morning, but I interpreted that mood in the worst sense it could bear.

Madame d'Yves after a few minutes fell asleep and began to nod this side and that. I looked at Hania. She wasn't asleep; her eyes were wide open and shining, as if with happiness.

She did not break the silence, she was evidently too busy with her own thoughts. It was only when we were almost home that she looked at me and, seeing me sunk in thought, said:

"What are you thinking of, Mr. Henryk? Of Lola?"

I made no reply, I only clenched my teeth and thought: "Torture me if it pleases you, but you shan't drag even one groan from me."

But Hania really didn't dream of torturing me. She put the question, for she had a right to put it.

Surprised at my silence she repeated the question. Again I made no reply, so she thought that my silence was a continuation of my sulky mood of the morning, and she fell silent too.

VIII

EARLY one morning a few days later the first rosy light of dawn came in through the heart-shaped openings in the shutters, and awoke me from sleep. Soon somebody knocked at the shutter, and there appeared in the rosy opening, not the face of the poet

Mickiewicz's Zosia, who similarly awoke Tadeusz,¹ nor that of my Hania, but the moustached face of Wach the forester, and a gruff voice cried:

"Young master!"

"What is it?"

"The wolves are chasing a she-wolf in the underwood at Pohorowe. We were going to lure them."

"I'm coming."

So I dressed, took a gun, a hunter's knife, and went out. Wach stood, wet all over with the morning dew, with his long, rusty, one-barrelled musket on his back, with which, though, he had never once missed. It was early in the morning. The sun was not yet risen, folk had not yet gone out to work, the cattle were not in the fields. The sky was only just getting blue, pink, and gold in the east, and it was dull in the west. The old man was in a hurry indeed!

"I have a gig and a nag. We'll go towards the clearing," said he.

We got in and started. Just beyond the barns a hare leapt out of the oats and, running across our way, jumped into the meadow, marking with darker traces its surface, that was silvered with dew.

The old man said:

"A hare across our path. Avaunt the omen!"

And then he added:

"It's late already. Very soon the earth will catch the shadow."

That meant that the sun would rise soon, for in the light of dawn bodies cast no shadow on the earth.

"And is it bad when there's shadow?"

"If it's a deep shadow we can manage, but when there's a little one one can do nothing."

And that meant in hunting language: the later, the worse, for every one knows that the nearer to noon the lesser the shadow.

"Where shall we call from?"

"From the pits, in the Pohorowe thickets themselves."

The Pohorowe thickets were a part of the wood which was extremely thickly grown, and where the pits were, that is, great holes under the roots of old trees which had been blown down by a storm.

¹ An allusion to Mickiewicz's poem *Tadeusz*. See footnote in *The Lighthouse-keeper*.—M. M. G.

"And do you think you can lure them with a call, Wach?"

"I'll begin to call like a she-wolf, and perhaps a he-wolf will come out."

"And perhaps not."

"Oh, it will."

When we reached Wach's hut we left the horse and gig to the lad there, and went on on foot. After half an hour's walk, when the sun had begun to rise, we took our places in the pits.

Round about us was a thicket of impenetrable, low brush-wood; here and there only big trees grew. The pit we were in was so deep that we were hidden in it, heads and all.

"Now, back to back," said Wach, in a low, gruff voice.

We set ourselves with our backs to each other, so that only the tops of our heads and the barrels of our guns projected above the surface of the ground.

"Keep watch," said Wach: "I'm beginning to call."

Putting two fingers into his mouth, and modulating with them the long-drawn sound he made, Wach howled like a she-wolf calling the he wolves.

"Look out!"

And he put his ear to the earth.

I heard nothing, but Wach lifted up his face from the ground and whispered:

"He's calling, but far off. It'll be a couple of miles."

Then he waited for a quarter of an hour, and howled again, moving his fingers in his mouth. The melancholy and menacing sound penetrated the undergrowth, and flew far, far over the wet earth, echoing from pine to pine.

Wach again put his ear to the ground.

"He's calling! He's not farther than a verst and a half away."

And really, I too heard now as it were the distant echo of the howling, still very far off, barely audible, but just distinguishable amid the rustling of the leaves.

"What way will he come out?"

"Towards you, young master."

Wach howled a third time. The answering howl now came from near at hand. I grasped my gun more firmly and we both held our breath. The silence was immense, only the wind shook the drops of dew from the hazel-bushes and they fell murmuring through the leaves. Far off, from another side of the wood, the mating cry of a grouse reached our ears.

Suddenly at about three hundred paces from me something stirred dimly in the thicket. The juniper bushes moved briskly, and from among their dark needles there emerged a grey, triangular head, with pointed ears and red eyes. I couldn't shoot, for it was as yet too far off, so I waited patiently, though with a beating heart. Soon the whole animal emerged from the juniper bushes and came in a few running jumps towards the pits, smelling eagerly all round him. At a hundred and fifty paces away, the wolf stopped and pricked up his ears as if he had an inkling of something. I knew that he would come no nearer and I pulled the trigger.

The roar of the shot was mingled with the dolorous whine of the he-wolf. I jumped out of the pit, Wach after me, but the wolf wasn't there. But Wach looked hard at the place where the dew was brushed off from the grass of the clearing and said:

"He 's bleeding!"

And really there were traces of blood on the grass.

"It wasn't a miss though it was a long shot. It wasn't a miss. He 's bleeding; oh, he 's bleeding! We must go after him."

So we did. Here and there we came upon trampled grass and more abundant traces of blood; it was obvious that the big, wounded wolf had rested from time to time. But meanwhile we had gone through the brushwood for an hour—for two: the sun was now high in the heavens; we had gone a very long way, finding nothing except the traces. Finally we came upon a projecting corner of the wood. The traces went across a field for two versts, towards a pond, and were finally lost in the mud, thickly-growing reeds and flags. We could get no farther without a dog.

"He 'll go no farther, and I 'll find him to-morrow," said Wach, and we turned homewards.

I very soon stopped thinking of the wolf and of Wach, and of the rather unlucky result of the hunt, but on the other hand I returned to my ordinary round of worries. When we came near the wood a hare jumped up almost under my feet, and I, instead of shooting at it, only started as if roused from meditation.

"Oh, sir!" cried Wach indignantly. "I 'd have shot at my own brother if he 'd run past me like that."

But I only smiled and went on in silence. Going along a forest path, called "Auntie's Path," leading to the high road to Chorzele, I saw on the wet earth fresh traces of the shod hoofs of horses.

"Do you know, Wach, what traces those may be?" I asked.

"I should think 'tis the young master from Chorzele, driving to the manor," replied Wach.

"Then I'll go to the manor too," replied I. "Good-bye, Wach!"

Wach began timidly to invite me to come into his hut, which was near by, and have something to eat. I knew that if I refused I should hurt him very much, yet I refused, only promising to come back the following morning. I didn't want Selim and Hania to remain alone together for long, without me. Throughout the five days that had elapsed since the visit to Ustrzyca Selim had been with us almost daily. The mutual liking of the two young people for each other developed swiftly before my eyes. But I, on my side, kept guard over them as over the apple of my eye, and to-day for the first time it had so chanced that they might remain for a longer time alone together. "Now, now," thought I to myself, "they'll come to an understanding!" and I felt I was getting pale, like a man who loses the hope of hope.

I feared it, as a man fears a misfortune, an unrevoked death-sentence, which he knows must be carried out, yet delays the execution as long as he can.

Returning home, I met Father Ludwik in the courtyard, with a sack on his head and a wire mask on his face. Father Ludwik was going to the bee-hives.

"Is Selim here, Father Ludwik?" I asked.

"Yes. It must be an hour and a half since he came."

My heart quivered uneasily.

"And where shall I find him?"

"They went off to the pond—he, and Hania, and Evie."

I ran quickly to the garden, to the edge of the pond, where the boats were. Yes, it was true, one of the larger boats was missing; I looked at the pond, but for the moment couldn't perceive them. I guessed that Selim must have turned to the right towards the alder wood, in such a way that the boat and those in it were hidden by the reeds growing on the banks. I seized an oar and, jumping into a little boat, the size for one person only, I rowed out on the pond, keeping near the reeds, not moving quite away from them, so as to see and not to be seen.

And in a short time I perceived them. On the wide sheet of water, which was overgrown with reeds, a boat stayed motion-

less: the oars hung in the rowlocks. At one end of it my little sister Eva sat, with her back to Hania and Selim, at the other, they two. Evie, leaning over the water, was merrily hitting it with her hands, and was completely occupied with that amusement; but Selim and Hania, with their shoulders almost touching, seemed to be absorbed in conversation. Not even the least breath of a breeze wrinkled the transparent, blue water, and the boat, Hania, Eva, and Selim were reflected in it like in a mirror, quietly and motionlessly.

Perhaps it was a very beautiful picture, but at the sight of it the blood went to my head. I understood everything; they had taken Evie with them because the child wouldn't be in their way, or understand their confessions of love. They had taken her for the sake of appearances.

"It's all over!" thought I to myself. "It's all over!" rustled the reeds. "It's all over!" lispd the water, lapping the edge of my boat, and it grew dark before my eyes. I felt cold and hot, I felt that my face paled. "You've lost Hania! You've lost her!" called voices above me and in me. And then I heard, as it were, the same voices calling "Jesus! Mary!" and then again they said: "Go nearer and hide in the reeds and you'll see more." I obeyed and slipped quickly along in the boat, like a cat. But even from that distance I couldn't hear the conversation, only I saw better: they were sitting side by side, on one seat, not holding hands. But Selim had turned towards Hania; it seemed to me for a moment that he was kneeling before her, but I only thought so. He had turned towards her and was looking beseechingly at her; but she wasn't looking at him, but as it were uneasily all round her, and then she looked up to heaven. I saw that she was confused; I saw that he was imploring her; then I saw him clasp his hands before her, and I saw her slowly turn her head and eyes towards him; and finally I saw her begin to lean towards him, but suddenly, recollecting herself, she started and retreated to the very edge of the boat, and then he seized her by the hand, as if fearing she would fall into the water. I saw that he didn't let her hand go again, and then I saw no more, for a cloud veiled my eyes. I let go the oar, and fell down to the bottom of the boat. "Help, Lord help!" I cried in my soul. "They're killing me!" I felt my breath fail. Oh, how greatly I loved and how unhappy I was! Lying at the bottom of the boat, and tearing in my rage the clothes I wore, I felt at the same time all the helplessness of that

rage. Yes, I was helpless, as helpless as an athlete with his hands bound, for what could I do? I could kill Selim or myself; I could dash my boat against theirs, and drown them both, but I couldn't tear love for Selim out of Hania's heart and take her for myself, exclusively, wholly!

Oh, that feeling of helpless anger, that conviction that nothing could be done! At that moment it was almost worse than any other. I was always ashamed of crying, ashamed even before myself. If pain forced tears from my eyes, pride no less forcibly restrained them. But now at last helpless rage broke forth, tearing my breast, and there, in that solitude, with the boat and the pair of lovers in it, reflected in the mirror-like water, with the quiet sky above me, and those reeds rustling sadly above my head, and the silence and my sorrow and my sad lot, I burst into loud sobbing, one great wave of tears. Lying on my back, with my hands clasped over my head, I almost roared with my great, my inexpressible grief.

Then I felt weak. A kind of torpor came over me. My senses almost ceased to act, my extremities grew cold. I got weaker and weaker. With the remnants of my consciousness I thought that now death was near, and a great icy calm. It seemed to me that that gloomy, sepulchral queen was taking possession of me, so I welcomed her with a quiet, a glassy eye. It was all over, I thought. And it was as if some great weight fell from my breast.

But nothing was over. How long I lay at the bottom of the boat I could not count. Light, fleecy clouds floated at times across the blue vault before my eyes. Sometimes lapwings or herons flew by, with complaining cry. The sun rose high in the heavens and burned fiercely. The wind went down, the reeds ceased to rustle and stood motionless. I awoke as from sleep and began to look about me. The boat with Hania and Selim in it had gone away. The quiet, the peace, the drowsiness that reigned in the natural world contrasted strangely with that torpid state from which I had awakened a moment ago. Above me all was quiet, smiling. Dark blue dragonflies sat on the edge of the boat, and on the flat, shield-like leaves of the water-lilies; little grey birds rocked themselves among the reeds, chirping sweetly; one could hear, here and there, the diligent buzzing of bees that had wandered out over the water; sometimes wild ducks quacked among the rushes; teals led their young ones out on to the water-meadows. The kingdom and

commonwealth of birds drew aside before my eyes the veil that covered its daily life, but I paid no attention to anything. My drowsiness had not yet left me. The day was excessively hot, I had an unbearable headache, so, leaning over the side of the boat, I caught water in my hands and drank it with feverish lips. I got a little stronger. Taking up the oars, I rowed home between the reedy banks, for it was already late, and probably at home they were asking where I was.

On the way I tried to calm myself. If Selim and Hania had made a mutual avowal of love, perhaps it was better, thought I. At any rate, the accursed days of uncertainty were ended. Misfortune had lifted its visor and stood before me with uncovered face. I knew it, and would have to fight with it. Strangely enough, that thought even began to have a painful charm for me. But I was not yet certain, and determined to question Evie skilfully, at least, as far as it was possible to do so.

They were at dinner when I reached home. I greeted Selim coldly and sat down to table in silence. My father looked at me and cried:

"What's the matter with you? Are you ill?"

"No; I'm well, but tired. I got up at three in the morning."

"Why?"

"Wach and I went wolf-hunting. I shot and wounded a wolf. I lay down to sleep later in the day and have a slight headache."

"Just glance at the mirror and see how you look."

Hania stopped eating for a moment, and stared hard at me.

"Perhaps your yesterday's visit to Ustrzyca has affected you, Mr. Henryk?" said she.

I looked her straight in the eyes and asked, almost sharply:

"What do you mean?"

Hania got confused and began to mumble something. Selim came to her aid.

"Why, of course! Lovers always look badly."

I began to look at Hania and Selim and back again and I answered slowly, distinctly, laying emphasis on every syllable:

"I don't see that either you or Selim are looking badly."

A crimson blush flooded both their faces. There was a moment of very embarrassing silence. I myself even was uncertain if I hadn't gone too far; fortunately, however, my father didn't hear everything that had been said, and Father Ludwik took it for the ordinary squabbling of young folk.

"A regular wasp, sting and all!" he cried, taking snuff. "See how he got you! Look to it; don't attack him!"

Heavens, how little that triumph comforted me; and how gladly would I have exchanged it for Selim's defeat!

After dinner, passing through the drawing-room, I looked into the mirror. I really did look like a ghost. I had blue marks under my eyes, my face had fallen in. It seemed to me that I had got very much uglier, but it was all the same to me now.

I went to look for Evie. Both my little sisters, who had their dinner earlier than we, were in the garden, where a little gymnasium had been arranged for them. Evie was sitting carelessly on a wooden seat, hung by four ropes from the cross-beam of the swing. As she sat she talked to herself, shaking her golden locks from time to time, and swinging her feet.

Seeing me, she smiled and stretched out her little hands. I took her in my arms and went on down the walk.

Then I sat down on a bench, and placing Evie in front of me, asked:

"And what has Evie been doing all day?"

"Evie went for a row with her husband and Hania," she replied boastfully.

Evie called Selim her husband.

"And was Evie good?"

"Yes."

"All good children always listen to what their elders say, and attend, so as to learn something. Does Evie remember what Selim and Hania were saying?"

"I've forgotten."

"Oh, maybe Evie remembers even a little bit?"

"I've forgotten."

"You're naughty. Evie's to remember at once or I won't love her."

The little girl began to rub one eye with her tiny fist, and with the other eye which was full of tears she looked at me timidly, and her face clouding over, as if she was going to cry, her mouth drooping, she said in a voice which was already quivering with tears:

"I've forgotten."

What could the poor little soul answer me? Truth to tell, I looked stupid even to myself, and, at the same time, was somehow ashamed of speaking with a double tongue to that

innocent little cherub. Besides, Evie was the pet of the whole house and my own, so I wouldn't torment her any longer. So I kissed her little face and let her go. The little girl ran at once to the swing, and I went away as wise as I had been before, yet convinced in my soul that an avowal had already taken place between Selim and Hania.

Towards evening that day Selim said to me:

"I shan't see you for a week. I'm going away."

"Where to?" I asked indifferently.

"My father," he answered, "has bidden me go for a visit to my uncle at Szumna. I must stay about a week there."

I looked at Hania. This news evoked no expression on her face. Evidently Selim had told her already.

However she smiled, and looking up from her fancy work, glanced a little archly, a little provokingly at Selim, and then said:

"And shall you like going there very much?"

"As a mastic likes to go on a leash," he replied quickly, but pulled himself up in time and, seeing that Madame d'Yves, who couldn't bear the least vulgarity, was rather annoyed, added:

"I beg your pardon for the expression. You see, I love my uncle, but I'm happier near her . . . near Madame d'Yves."

And so saying he cast a romantic look at Madame d'Yves, which made every one laugh, not excepting Madame d'Yves, who, though touchy, had a special weakness for Selim. But she pinched his ear lightly and said, with a good-natured smile.

"Young fellow, I might be your mother!"

Selim kissed her hand, and they were friends, and I thought to myself:

"What a difference there is between me and that Selim! If Hania returned my affection, as she does his, I'd do nothing but dream and look up to heaven. What mind should I have for jokes?" And there he was, laughing and joking and making merry as if nothing at all had happened.

Even when he was beaming with happiness he was always merry.

Just as he was leaving he said to me:

"D' you know what, ride with me!"

"No, I won't. I haven't the least intention of doing so."

The cold tone of the reply struck Selim.

"You've got strange, somehow. For some time past you've been unrecognizable. But——"

"Finish your sentence."

"But to lovers everything is pardoned."

"Except when they get in our way," I answered in a hollow voice.

Selim cast at me a penetrating look, swift as lightning, that pierced to the very bottom of my soul.

"What are you saying?"

"I'm saying that I won't go, and, moreover, that not everything is pardonable."

If it hadn't been for the fact that everybody was present when this conversation took place, Selim would assuredly at once have had a clear understanding about the affair. But I didn't want there to be a clear understanding about the affair, until I had surer proofs. Yet I saw that my last words made Selim uneasy, and frightened Hania. He lingered about for a moment more, delaying his departure for trifling reasons and then, seizing an opportunity, said to me in a whisper:

"Mount and come part of the way with me. I want to have a talk with you."

"Some other time," I answered aloud. "I don't feel very well to-day."

IX

SELIM really did go away to his uncle's and stayed there, not a week, but ten days. Those days were sad ones for us in Litwinowo. Hania seemed to avoid me and look upon me as it were with secret apprehension. I had not, indeed, any intention of talking to her openly about anything, for pride fettered the words on my lips, but she, I know not why, managed so that we were not alone for a single moment. Moreover, she evidently missed Selim. She looked ill, and got thinner, and I looked upon that yearning of hers and thought: "So it's no passing, girlish fancy, but, unfortunately, a real, deep love!" I myself, too, was irritable, gloomy, and sad. In vain my father, Father Ludwik, and Madame d'Yves kept asking me what was the matter with me, if I was ill. I answered in the negative, but their anxiety only vexed me. I spent whole days alone, on horseback, either in the woods or on the ponds in a boat. I lived like a savage. Once I spent a whole night in the wood, with a gun and a dog, by a camp fire which I had purposely lit. Sometimes I would spend half a day with our

shepherd, who was a "wise man," and had become like a wild man by reason of the solitude in which he lived. He was perpetually collecting various herbs, and testing their properties, and he initiated me into the mysterious world of charms and superstitions. But really—who would believe it?—there were moments when I longed for Selim and for my "wheel of torments", as I generally called it.

Once it came into my head to visit old Mirza at Chorzele. The old man, pleased that I visited him for his own sake received me with open arms. But I had come there for another purpose. It had just entered my head to look into the eyes of the portrait of that terrible Mirza, the colonel of light horse in Sobieski's day, and when I looked into those ominous eyes, which followed one everywhere, I recalled my own ancestors whose portraits hung in the parlour at home, who were equally severe, equally hard.

My mind, under the influence of impressions of this kind, became strangely excited. The solitude, the quiet of the night, life near to nature, all that should have tranquillized me; but I had a poisoned wound. At times I gave myself up to dreams, which made my state still worse. Sometimes, lying in some distant corner of the forest, or in a boat on the ponds, I pictured to myself that I was in Hania's room, at her feet, that I was kissing her feet, her hands, and her frock, that I was calling her by the most caressing names, and that she was placing her adored hands on my burning brow and saying: "You've suffered enough now, let us forget everything. That was a bad dream. I love you, Henryk!" But then came awakening, and that grey reality, that future of mine, gloomy as a cloudy day, always without her, without her to the end of my life, seemed the more terrible to me. I got still more morose, I avoided people, even my father, Father Ludwik and Madame d'Yves. I got deadly tired of Casimir, with his schoolboy talkativeness, with his curiosity, his perpetual laughter, and his eternal pranks. And yet those kind folk tried to divert me and suffered in silence over my state, unable to explain it. Hania, whether she guessed or not, for she had strong reasons to believe that I was in love with Lola Ustrzycka, did what she could to comfort me. But I was so ill-tempered, even to her, that she couldn't help being a little afraid when she spoke to me. My father himself, usually severe and ruthless, tried to distract me, and interest me a little and, at the same time, to find out what was the matter with me.

More than once he began a conversation with me, which, as he thought, should have interested me. One day after dinner he went out into the courtyard with me and said, looking questioningly at me: "Doesn't one thing sometimes occur to you? I wanted to ask you about it long ago. Doesn't it seem to you that Selim keeps a little too near Hania?" In the ordinary way I should have confessed and let myself be caught, as the saying is, red-handed. But I was in such a mood that I didn't even by one quiver show the impression that my father's words made upon me, and I said quietly:

"No. I know that it isn't the case."

It hurt me that my father intervened in these matters. I considered that since this question was about me alone, I alone should decide it.

"Would you answer for that?" asked my father.

"Yes. Selim's in love with a girl in Warsaw, with some schoolgirl."

"For you see you're Hania's guardian, and you ought to look after her."

I knew that my kind old father only said this to arouse my self-respect, interest me in something, and force my thoughts out of that gloomy circle in which they seemed to go round and round. But I answered as it were in a spirit of contradiction, indifferently, and gloomily:

"Oh, what sort of a guardian am I? You weren't there, so old Nicholas left her in my care, but I'm not the real guardian."

My father frowned; but, seeing that he would get nothing out of me that way, he tried another. He smiled beneath his grey moustache, winked as soldiers do with one eye, pinched my ear lightly and half familiarly, half teasingly asked:

"And maybe Hania's bewitched you? Eh, boy, tell me—eh?"

"Hania? Not in the least! That would indeed be a funny thing."

I lied like a trooper, but it went easier with me than I had expected.

"Perhaps Lola Ustrzycka then? Eh?"

"Lola Ustrzycka's a flirt."

My father got impatient.

"Then why the devil do you trail about like a recruit at his first drill?"

"How can I tell? There's nothing the matter with me."

But questionings of that sort, which my father in his anxiety did not spare me, nor did Father Ludwik or Madame d'Yves, worried me and irritated me more and more. Finally my intercourse with them began to be disagreeable. I lost my temper, and got angry over every little thing. Father Ludwik saw in that traits of a despotic character, coming to the surface as I grew up, and, looking at my father, smiled significantly and said: "Race of fighting cocks!" But even so, he sometimes lost patience. It sometimes came to very disagreeable scenes between me and my father. Once even, at dinner, when we were disputing about the gentry and democracy, and I declared that I would have preferred a hundred times over not to come of gentle blood, my father bade me leave the room. The women wept over this, and consequently the whole household went about with downcast faces. As for me, I was then neither aristocrat nor democrat, I was only love-lorn and unhappy. I had no room at all for principles or theories or social convictions, and if I fought for some of them against others, it was only because I was irritated, it was to annoy anybody or nobody, for no reason at all; just as, for the sake of being contrary, I started religious disputes with Father Ludwik, which ended in the banging of doors. In a word, I made not only myself but the whole household miserable, so that when Selim at length came back, after an absence of ten days, it was an untold relief to every one. When he came to see us, I was out, for I was riding about at random in the country round. I got back home only towards evening, and rode straight into the farmyard, where at once the stable-boy, as he took the horse from me, said:

"The young master from Chorzele has come."

Just then Casimir ran up and repeated the same news to me.

"I know it already," I answered gruffly: "Where's Selim?"

"I think he's in the garden with Har'la. I'll go and look."

We both went into the garden, but Casimir ran on in front, and I followed slowly, purposely not hastening to greet our guest.

I hadn't gone fifty paces when, at a turn in the walk, I again saw Casimir, returning towards me in haste.

Casimir, who was a great clown and wag, while still far off began to make strange grimaces and gestures, like a monkey. He was red in the face too, he had his fingers on his lips, he was laughing and simultaneously stifling his laughter. Coming near to me, he called in a low voice:

"Henryk! He he he! 'Sh!"

"Whatever are you up to?"

"Sh! My word! He he he! Selim's kneeling before Hania in the hop arbour. My word!"

I seized him at once by the arm and dug my fingers into his flesh.

"Hold your tongue! Stay here! Don't say a word to any one, do you understand? Stay here. I'll go myself, but hold your tongue, not a word to any one, if you want me to live."

Casimir, who had at the beginning taken the whole thing from its humorous side, seeing the corpse-like pallor of my face, naturally got terrified and stayed where he was, gaping, while I ran madly towards the arbour.

Crawling quickly and silently, like a snake, among the barberry bushes which surrounded the little arbour, I got up to its very walls. These walls were trellised—made of thin laths—so I could see and hear everything. The disgusting role of an eavesdropper did not appear at all disgusting to me. I gently moved the leaves apart and applied my ear.

"Somebody's near," I heard in Hania's voice, speaking in a subdued whisper.

"No. It's the leaves moving on the branches," replied Selim.

I looked at them through the green veil of leaves. Selim was no longer kneeling by Hania, but was sitting beside her on the low bench. She was as pale as a sheet, her eyes were closed, her head leaning back, supported on his shoulder, he had an arm round her waist, and was pressing her to him with love and ecstasy.

"Hania, I love you, I love you!" he kept repeating in a passionate whisper and, as he bent his head over her, his lips sought hers; but she shrank back, as if refusing the kiss; yet their lips met, came close together, and stayed thus united, pressed to each other, for a long, long time—ah, it seemed to me for whole ages.

And then it seemed to me furthermore—that everything they had to say to each other they said in their kisses. A kind of shame stopped the words on their lips. They were bold enough to kiss, but not to converse. A deadly silence reigned, and amid that silence only their quick, passionate breathing reached me.

I caught the wooden bars of the arbour wall, and feared that they might crumble under that convulsive grasp. It got dark

before my eyes, I felt giddy. The earth fled from under me into some infinite abyss. But even at the price of my life I wanted to know what they were going to say; so I still controlled myself and, drawing in the air through my dry and burning lips, with my brow pressed to the bars, I listened, counting every breath.

The silence endured a while still, but at last Hania, breaking it, began to whisper:

"Enough now, enough! I daren't look into your eyes. Let us go."

And, turning her head aside, she tried to disengage herself from his embrace.

"Oh, Hania! What's happened to me? How happy I am!" cried Selim.

"Let us go. Somebody 'll come here."

Selim jumped up with shining eyes and distended nostrils.

"Let the whole world come," he answered. "I love and I 'll tell every one so to their face. I don't know myself how it happened. I fought with myself, I suffered, for it seemed to me that Henryk loved you and you him. But now I don't care about anything. You love me, so it's a question of your happiness. Oh, Hania, Hania!"

And here again I heard the sound of a kiss, and then Hania began to speak in a low and as if faltering voice:

"I believe it, I believe it, Mr. Selim, but I have a great many things to tell you. They want, it seems, to send me abroad to Madame. Yesterday Madame d'Yves was talking about it with the master. Madame d'Yves thinks I am the cause of Mr Henryk's strange state. They think he's in love with me. I myself don't know if it's so or not. Sometimes I think he is. I don't understand him. I'm afraid of him. I feel he will interfere with us, separate us, and I—"

And she concluded with a scarcely audible whisper:

"I love you very, very much."

"Listen, Hania," replied Selim. "No human power shall separate us. If Henryk forbids me to come here, I 'll write to you. I know a person who 'll always carry the letters. I 'll ride here myself into the garden at twilight. But you shan't go away. . . . If they want to send you away I won't allow it, as God's in His heaven. Hania, don't even speak of such things, or I 'll go mad. Oh, my beloved, my beloved!"

Seizing her hands, he pressed them passionately to his lips. She jumped up hastily from the bench.

"I hear voices. People are coming," she cried in terror.

They both left the arbour, though nobody was coming, nobody came. The evening rays of the sun cast their golden gleam upon them, and to me that gleam seemed as red as blood. I, too, dragged myself towards home. Just at the turn of the walk I met Casimir, who was lying in wait.

"They came out. I saw them," he whispered. "Tell me what I'm to do."

"Shoot him in the head!" I burst forth.

Casimir got fiery red, like a rose, and his eyes sparkled with a phosphorescent light.

"All right!" he rejoined.

"Stop! Don't be a fool. Do nothing. Don't mix yourself up with anything, and on your honour, Casimir, hold your tongue. Leave everything to me. If I want you I'll tell you; but not a word to anybody."

"I won't open my mouth, even if I am killed for it."

We walked for a moment in silence. Casimir, now impressed with the importance of the matter, and scenting menacing events, which made his heart leap with excitement, looked at me with sparkling eyes, then said:

"Henryk!"

"What?"

We both whispered, though none heard us.

"Will you fight with Mirza?"

"I don't know. Perhaps."

Casimir stopped and suddenly threw his arms round my neck.

"Henryk, Henryk dear, my own darling Henryk! If you want to fight with him, let me fight him instead of you. I can manage him. Just let me try! Let me, Henryk, let me!"

Casimir was just simply dreaming chivalric dreams, but I felt him to be my brother as never before, so I pressed him to my heart as hard as I could and said:

"No, Casimir, I know nothing as yet. And, besides, he wouldn't accept your challenge. I don't know yet what'll happen. Meanwhile tell them to saddle my horse earlier. I'll ride away before him, catch him on the way, and talk to him. Meanwhile, keep a watch on them, but don't let them see that you know anything. Tell them at the stable to saddle my horse."

"Will you take arms with you?"

"For shame, Casimir! Why, he has no arms with him! No.

I only want to talk to him. Be easy and be off to the stable at once."

Casimir ran off at once to do as he was told, and I returned slowly home. I was like a man who has been hit on the head with the blunt side of a hatchet. To tell the truth, I didn't know what I was to do. I didn't know how I was to act. I just simply wanted to scream.

Before I was perfectly certain that I had lost Hania's heart I had wanted to be certain, I had thought that, anyhow, a stone would fall from my heart; now misfortune had lifted her visor, and I looked upon her cold, her icy face, into her stony eyes; and again a new uncertainty was born in my heart, not the uncertainty of my misfortune, but the hundredfold worse feeling of my own helplessness: the uncertainty as to how I was to fight misfortune.

My heart was overflowing with gall, bitterness, rage. The voices advocating devotion, self-sacrifice, that had erstwhile sometimes cried out within my soul: "Renounce Hania for the sake of her happiness. You ought to care for her happiness before all. Sacrifice yourself!"—those voices were now quite silent. The angel of quiet sadness, the angel of tender emotion, and the angel of tears, fled far from me. I felt myself a reptile that has been trodden upon, but the existence of whose sting has been forgotten. Up to the present I had let misfortune chase me as dogs do a wolf, but too ill-treated and brought to bay, I began, like a wolf, to show my teeth. Some new active force, the name of which was revenge, awoke in my heart. I began to feel, as it were, a kind of hatred towards Selim and Hania. "I will lose my life," thought I, "I will lose everything that one can lose in the world, and I will not allow those two to be happy." I welcomed that thought, caught hold of it as a condemned man does his cross. I had found a reason for living. The horizon lightened around me. I breathed deeply, very deeply and freely, as I never had done before. My scattered and dishevelled thoughts became orderly again, and were turned with full force in a direction menacing for Selim and Hania. When I came home I was almost tranquil, cold. In the drawing-room sat Madame d'Yves. Father Ludwik, Hania, Selim, and Casimir, who had just come back from the stable, and who did not leave the two latter for a moment.

"Is my horse ready?" I asked Casimir.

"Yes."

"You 'll come part of the way with me?" put in Selim.

"I can. I'm going to the stacks to see if they haven't been damaged. Casimir, give me your place."

Casimir did so, and I sat down beside Selim and Hania on the sofa that was placed beneath the window. Involuntarily I remembered how we had sat, so long ago now, just after Nicholas's death, when Selim told the Crimean fairy-tale of Sultan Haroun and Lala the fairy. But then Hania, little and tearful, had leaned her small, golden head upon my breast and gone to sleep. To-day that same Hania, taking advantage of the twilight which was falling in the drawing-room, was secretly pressing Selim's hand. Then the sweet voice of friendship had united us all; to-day love and hatred were soon to wrestle with each other. But on the surface all was quiet. The lovers smiled at each other, I was gayer than usual, and none suspected what kind of gaiety it was. Soon Madame d'Yves asked Selim to play something. He stood up, sat down to the piano, and began to play one of Chopin's mazurkas, while I remained for a moment alone with Hania on the sofa. I noticed that she looked at Selim as at a rainbow's glory, and that on the wings of music she flew away into dreamland, so I determined to bring her back to earth.

"Hania," said I, "how many talents Selim has, hasn't he? He plays and sings."

"Oh, yes!" said she.

"And besides what a handsome face he has—just look at him now!"

Hania's eyes followed mine. Selim sat in the twilight, only his head lit up by the last rays of the sunset, and in that glow, with his eyes raised to heaven, he looked as though he were inspired, as indeed he was at that moment.

"Handsome, isn't he, Hania?" I repeated.

"Do you love him very much?"

"He doesn't mind whether I do or not, but the women love him. Oh, how that schoolgirl, Josey, loved him!"

Hania's smooth brow frowned uneasily.

"And he?" she asked.

"Oh, he loves one to-day, another to-morrow! He can never love one woman long. That's his nature. If he ever tells you that he loves you don't believe him." (Here I began to speak emphatically.) "What he 'll want will be your kisses and not your heart. Do you derstand?"

"Mr. Henryk!"

"Oh, of course; what am I saying? Why, it doesn't matter to you at all. And besides, you're so modest, would you ever kiss a strange man, Hania? I beg your pardon, for it seems to me that I've offended you even by the supposition. You'd never let that happen, would you, Hania? Never!"

Hania started up and tried to get away, but I seized her by the hand and kept her there by force. I tried to keep up an appearance of calm, and rage was choking me, like claws upon my throat. I felt that I was losing control over myself.

"Answer," I said, with suppressed excitement, "or I won't let you go."

"Mr. Henryk, what do you want, what are you saying?"

"I'm saying . . . I'm saying," I whispered with clenched teeth, "I'm saying that you're shameless. Ha!"

Hania sat down again helplessly on the sofa. I looked at her. . . . She was as white as a sheet. But pity for the poor little thing was far from me. I seized her hand, and squeezing her tiny fingers, went on:

"Listen! I was at your feet. I loved you more than anything in the world."

"Mr. Henryk!"

"Be silent! I saw and heard everything. You're shameless, you and he!"

"My God! My God!"

"You're shameless! I'd not have dared to kiss the hem of your frock and he kissed you on the lips. You yourself responded to his kisses. Ha! 'a, I despise you, I hate you!"

My voice died in my throat. Only I began to breathe quickly and gasp for the air which failed me.

"You guessed rightly," I said, after a moment, "that I should separate you. Even though I lose my life in doing it, I'll separate you. Even though I had to kill you, him, and myself! What I said to you a moment ago was a lie. He loves you, he wouldn't jilt you, but I'll separate you."

"What are you having such a lively discussion about?" asked Madame d'Yves, from the other end of the drawing-room.

There was a moment in which I wanted to jump up and tell them everything out loud, but I recollected myself, and replied, in an apparently calm, though somewhat broken, voice:

"We're quarrelling as to which arbour in our garden is the more beautiful—the rose arbour or the hop arbour."

Selim suddenly stopped playing and looked hard at us, and then said very quietly:

"I prefer the *hop* *arbour* to any other."

"You haven't bad taste," I replied. "Hania thinks otherwise."

"Do you really, Miss Hania?" he asked.

"Yes," she said sottly.

Again I felt that I couldn't hold out long, talking so. Red circles began to flit before my eyes. I started up and running through several rooms to the dining-room, seized a decanter of water that stood on the table and poured it over my head. Then, knowing no more what I was doing, I dashed the decanter on to the floor, so that it smashed into a thousand fragments, and ran out into the outer hall.

My horse and Selim's, already saddled, waited before the porch.

I rushed to my room for a moment, to dry off the water a little, and, having done so, returned to the drawing-room.

There I found Father Ludwik and Selim in the greatest fright.

"What's happened?" I asked.

"Hania's ill, she's fainted."

"What? How?" I shouted, seizing the priest by the arm.

"Just after you went away she burst out crying and then fainted. Madame d'Yves has taken her to her room."

Without a word I ran to Madame d'Yves's room. Hania had in fact burst out crying and then fainted, but the paroxysm was over. When I saw her I forgot about everything, and throwing myself on my knees before her bed, like a madman, not minding that Madame d'Yves was there, I cried:

"Hania, my dearest, my beloved, what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing, it's over," she answered in a weak voice, and tried to smile. "It's over, really and truly!"

I sat by her for a quarter of an hour. Then I kissed her hand and went back to the drawing-room. It was a lie! I didn't hate her. I loved her as I never had before. But again, when I saw Selim in the drawing-room I wanted to strangle him. Oh, I hated, I hated him now from the bottom of my soul! He and Father Ludwik ran up to me at once.

"Well, how is she?"

"All right now."

And turning to Selim I said into his ear:

"Go on home. We'll meet to-morrow by the mounds on the edge of the wood. I want to have a talk with you. I don't want you to keep coming here. Our intercourse must cease."

Selim got red in the face.

"What does that mean?"

"I'll explain to you to-morrow. I don't want to to-day. Do you understand? I don't want to. To-morrow, at six in the morning."

So saying, I went back to Madame d'Yves's room. Selim ran a few steps after me, but stopped at the door. A few minutes later I saw him through the window riding away.

I sat for an hour in the next room to Hania's little one. I couldn't go in to her, for, weak with crying, she had gone to sleep. Madame d'Yves and Father Ludwik had gone in to my father, and they were holding a council. I sat alone till it was time for supper.

At supper-time I noticed that my father, Father Ludwik, and Madame d'Yves had half mysterious, half severe faces. I confess that I felt uneasiness coming over me. Could they have guessed anything? It was probable that they had. Anyhow, rather unnatural things had taken place that day among us young folk.

"I had a letter from your mother to-day," my father said to me.

"How is my mother?"

"Quite well. But she's uneasy about how things are going at home. She wants to come back soon, but I won't let her. She must stay a month or so longer."

"What's mother uneasy about?"

"Why, you know, don't you, that there's smallpox in the village? I was incautious enough to mention it to her."

Truth to tell, I knew nothing about there being smallpox in the village. Perhaps, indeed, I had heard of it, but the news had fallen on deaf ears.

"Won't you go and see her, father?" I asked.

"I'll see. We'll have a talk about it."

"Why, our dear lady's been nearly a year away," said Father Ludwik.

"It's necessary for her health's sake. She'll be able to spend this coming winter here. She writes that she feels very much better, only that she's longing for us and is uneasy," replied my father.

And then, turning to me, he added:

"Come to my room after supper. I want to have a talk with you."

"Very well, father."

I stood up and, together with all the others, went to Hania. She was now quite well; she even wanted to get up, but my father wouldn't let her. About ten o'clock in the evening a four-wheeled gig drove up to the door. It was Doctor Stanislaus, who had been all the afternoon in the peasants' cottages. Having examined Hania thoroughly, he said she wasn't ill at all, but wanted amusement and rest. He forbade her to study, but ordered her to amuse herself and keep cheerful.

My father asked his advice as to whether it wouldn't be better to send my two little sisters away somewhere, till the epidemic passed off, or whether they could stay at home. The doctor reassured him, saying that there was no danger. He himself had purposely written to my mother, telling her she might be easy. Then he went to bed, for he was simply sinking with fatigue. I went with him with a candle in my hand to his quarters for the night, where he was to sleep with me, and I was inclined to go to bed myself, for I was inexpressibly wearied by the emotions of the day, when Franek came in and said:

"The master wants you in his room."

I went at once. My father was sitting in his room, at his desk, on which lay my mother's letter. Father Ludwik and Madame d'Yves were also present. My heart beat uneasily, like the heart of a culprit who has to stand before a court, for I was almost certain that they wanted to question me about Hania. My father began to talk to me about very serious matters. He had decided to send my sisters and Madame d'Yves to Kopczany, to his brother, my uncle, so as to ease my mother's mind. But, that being so, Hania would have to have remained alone among us. And this my father did not wish. He said that he knew that there was something going on among us young folk which he did not wish to inquire into, but which he did not approve of. He expected, however, that Hania's departure would put a stop to it.

Here they all began to look questioningly at me, but were not a little surprised when, instead of desperately resisting Hania's departure, I joyfully agreed to it. I, too, reckoned that this departure was equivalent to the breaking of all relations between her and Selim. Moreover a hope, like a will-o'-the-wisp,

glimmered in my heart that I and none other would take Hania to our mother. I knew that my father couldn't go away, for the harvest was at hand; I knew that Father Ludwik had never been abroad, so I alone remained. But it was a weak hope, and soon, like a will-o'-the-wisp, it went out, when my father said that Mrs. Ustrzycka was going to the seaside in a few days' time, and had consented to take Hania with her and bring her to my mother. Hania was to leave the night after next. It saddened me greatly, yet I preferred, in any case, her going, even without me, to her staying. Besides, I confess, it gave me immeasurable joy to think what Selim would do, and how he would receive the news, when I told it to him on the morrow.

X

AT six the next morning I was at the mounds, where Selim already awaited me. As I rode there I promised myself solemnly that I would be calm.

"What did you want to say to me?" asked Selim.

"I wanted to tell you that I know everything. You love Hania and she you. Mirza, you behaved unworthily in ensnaring Hania's heart. That was what, in the first place, I wanted to say to you."

Selim paled, but everything within him flared up. He rode at me in such a way that our horses almost touched one another, and asked:

"Why? Why? Mind what you're saying."

"First of all, because you're a Mussulman and she's a Christian. You can't marry her."

"I'll change my religion."

"Your father won't let you."

"Oh yes, he will, and, anyhow——"

"Anyhow, there are other obstacles. Even if you changed your religion, neither I nor my father will give you Hania, no, never! Do you understand?"

Mirza bent towards me in his saddle and retorted, laying emphasis on every syllable:

"I won't ask your leave. Do *you* understand?"

I was still calm, for I was keeping the news of Hania's departure to the last.

"Not only will she not be yours," I replied coldly, and with equal emphasis, "but you shall see her no more. I know you

were minded to send letters to her. I warn you I will see about that, and the first time it happens I will have your messenger beaten. You yourself are not to come to our place any more. I forbid you!"

"We shall see," he retorted, panting with anger; "and let me speak in my turn. It was not I who behaved unworthily. I see clearly now. I asked you if you loved her. You answered 'No!' I would have retired while there was still time; you rejected my sacrifice. Whose fault is it? You lied, saying that you didn't love her. Through self-love, selfish pride, you were ashamed to admit that you were in love. You loved in the darkness, I in the light. You loved secretly, I openly. You poisoned her life for her. I tried to make her happy. Whose fault is it? I would have retired. God knows, I would have retired. But to-day it's too late. To-day she loves me; and listen to what I'm going to say to you. You may forbid me to come to your house, you may intercept my letters, but I swear to you that I will not renounce Hania, that I will love her eternally, and will seek her out everywhere. I'm behaving simply and honestly, but I love her, I love her more than anything in the world, and that's my whole life, and without it I should die. I don't want to bring unhappiness into your house, but remember that there is now something within me that I myself fear. Oh, if you wrong Hania . . ."

He said all this hastily, pale, and with tightened lips. A mighty love had taken hold of that fiery, eastern nature, and beat from it like heat from a flame; but he disregarded that, and answered with an indifferent, cool determination.

"I didn't come here to listen to your confidences. Your threats I scoff at and despise, and I repeat to you once more: 'Hania shall never be yours.'"

"Listen again," said Selim. "I won't attempt to say how and how much I love Hania, for I couldn't express it or you understand it. But I swear to you that in spite of all my love, if she loved you I would still find sufficient generous feeling in my soul to renounce her for ever. Why, Henryk, we ought to think of her! You were always generous. So listen. Renounce her, and then ask me even for my life. Here's my hand, Henryk. Hania's in question, Hania! Remember!"

And he bent towards me with open arms, but I reined back my horse.

"Leave me and my father to care for her. We have arranged

for her already. I have the honour to inform you that Hania is going abroad the day after to-morrow, and that you will see her no more. Good-bye!"

"Oho! If that's so, we shall see!"

I turned my horse round and rode home, without looking behind me.

There was gloom in our house for those two days that remained before Hania's departure. Madame d'Yves and my sisters left the very next day after my conversation with my father. There remained only I, my father, Father Ludwik, and Hania. The poor little soul already knew that she was to go away, and the news cast her into despair. Evidently she wanted to find rescue and a final means of salvation in me. But I, guessing this, tried not to be alone with her for a single moment. I knew myself well enough and was conscious that by her tears she could do what she liked with me, and that I should not be able to deny her anything. I avoided even her glance, for I could not endure that sort of petition for pity which was expressed in it, as often as she looked at me or at my father.

On the other hand, even had I wished to intercede with my father for her, I knew it would be in vain, for my father never changed what he had once determined upon. And besides, shame also kept me afar from Hania. Before her I was ashamed of my last conversation with Mirza, of that recent severity of mine, of the whole part I had played, and finally of the fact that though I did not approach her, I tracked her from afar. But I had reason to track her. I knew that Mirza was circling, like a bird of prey, night and day, round our home. On the very next day after that conversation, I saw that Hania hastily hid a little piece of paper with writing upon it: infallibly a letter either from him or to him. I guessed that perhaps they would even see each other, but although I kept watch in the twilight for Selim, I couldn't catch him. Meanwhile, the two days passed quickly, like an arrow through the air. Towards the evening of the day in which Hania was to leave by night for Ustrzyca, my father went to town to the fair to buy horses and took Casimir with him to try them. Father Ludwik and I were to accompany Hania.

I observed that as the decisive hour approached a strange uneasiness possessed Hania. She kept changing colour and shaking all over. Sometimes she shrank as if frightened. Finally the sun went down, and it went down in clouds, big,

piling clouds, yellowish in colour, threatening hail and a storm. Several times a distant clap of thunder was audible in the western sky, like the loud growling of the approaching storm. The air was heavy, sultry, and impregnated with electricity. The birds had hidden themselves under the eaves or in the trees, and only the swallows rushed about uneasily in the air; the leaves ceased to rustle on the trees and hung as if fainting; from the farmyard came the mournful bellowing of the cattle, returning from the fields. A kind of gloomy disquietude had taken possession of all natural things. Father Ludwik bade the windows be shut. I wanted to get to Ustrzyca before the outbreak of the storm, so I started up to go to the stable and order the carriage to the door. At the moment of my exit from the room, Hania started up too, but sat down at once. I looked at her. She blushed and paled by turns.

"I'm stifling, stifling!" she cried, and, sitting by the window, began to fan herself with her handkerchief. Her strange disquietude obviously increased. "We can wait," said Father Ludwik to me; "the storm will burst in about half an hour."

"In half an hour," I replied, "we'll be nearly at Ustrzyca, and besides, who knows, it may only be threatening"; and I ran to the stable. A horse had already been saddled for me, but as usual they had dawdled over the harnessing. It was half an hour before the groom drove up to the porch with the carriage, I coming behind on horseback. The storm seemed just about to break, but I didn't want to delay any longer. Hania's trunks were carried out and fastened to the carriage. Father Ludwik was already waiting in the porch in a white linen cloak, and with an immense umbrella, also white.

"Where's Hania? Is she ready?" I asked him.

"Yes, she's ready. About half an hour ago she went to pray in the chapel."

I went to the chapel, but did not find Hania there; from the chapel I went to the dining-room, from the dining-room to the parlour. Hania was not there.

"Hania! Hania!" I began to call.

Nobody answered.

Already somewhat uneasy, I went to her room. I thought perhaps she had fallen ill. Old Wengrowska, crying, sat there.

"Is it time now," she asked, "to say good-bye to Miss Hania?"

"Where is she?" I asked impatiently.

"She went to the garden."

I ran out, too, to the garden.

"Hania! Hania! it's time to get into the carriage."

Silence.

"Hania! Hania!"

As if in reply, the leaves rustled uneasily at the first breath of the storm, a few big drops of rain fell, and again silence reigned.

"What's this?" I asked myself, and felt that my hair rose on my head with terror.

"Hania! Hania!"

For a moment it seemed to me that I heard a reply from the other end of the garden. I breathed again. "Oh, what a fool I am!" thought I, and ran in the direction whence the sound came.

I found nothing and nobody there.

The garden on that side was bordered by a fence, beyond which a field track ran towards the sheepfold in the fields. I grasped the fence and looked at the track. There was nothing on it, but Ignac, the farm boy, was tending the grazing geese in the ditch close to the fence.

"Ignac!"

Ignac took off his cap and ran to the fence.

"Did you happen to see Miss Hania?"

"Yes, I saw her. She's just driven by."

"What? How? Where did she drive to?"

"Why, towards the wood, with the young master from Chorzele. Oh, they were driving as fast as the horses could gallop."

Jesus! Mary! Hania had eloped with Slim!

It got dark before my eyes, and then, as it were, lightning flashed through my head. I recalled Hania's uneasiness, that letter which I had seen in her hand. So everything had been arranged! Mirza had written to her and seen her. They had chosen a moment just before our departure, since they knew that then every one in the house would be busy. Jesus! Mary! Cold sweat drenched me, and my hair bristled on my head. I found myself in the porch, not remembering how I got there.

"A horse! A horse!" I cried in a terrible voice.

"What's happened? What's happened?" cried Father Ludwik.

But the only answer he got was the roar of thunder which sounded at that moment. The wind whistled in my ears from

the mad galloping of my horse. Rushing into the lime avenue, I turned my horse towards the road by which they had gone. I leaped over one fence, then over another and rode on further. The tracks were visible. But meanwhile the storm had burst forth; it had grown dark; the dazzling zigzags of the lightning began to trace themselves on the dark banks of cloud. Sometimes the whole sky became one flame and then a yet thicker darkness fell. Rain poured in one continuous stream. The trees by the wayside twisted themselves convulsively from one side to another. My horse, beaten with mad blows of my riding-whip and spurred onward, began to breathe hard and groan, and I did the same, with rage. Leaning forward on the horse's neck, I traced the marks on the road, neither knowing nor thinking of aught else. Thus I rushed into the wood. At this moment the storm increased yet more in fury. A kind of frenzy was over sky and earth. The wood bent like a field of grain and waved its dark branches, the thunder echoed in the darkness from pine to pine. The roar of the thunderclaps, the rattling of the boughs, the cracking of breaking branches: all this mingled in a kind of hellish orchestra. I could no more see the tracks, but I tore onward like the wind. It was only beyond the wood that I picked up the tracks again; but with horror I perceived simultaneously that my horse was breathing harder, and his pace was slackening. I redoubled the blows of my riding-switch. Here, beyond the wood a very sea of sand began, which I couldn't avoid by skirting it: but through which Selim must have driven. That should have delayed their flight.

I looked up to heaven. "O God, make me overtake them and then kill me if Thou wilt!" I cried in despair. And my prayer was heard. A sudden red flash of lightning tore the darkness apart, and by its bloody light I caught sight of the four-wheeled gig. I couldn't distinguish the faces of the fugitives, but I was now certain that it was they. They were still half a verst away, but they had not fled very fast, for in the darkness and pouring rain Selim had been obliged to drive carefully. I gave a cry of rage and joy together. Now, now, they couldn't escape.

Selim looked round, shouted also, and began to belabour the frightened horses with his whip. By the glare of the lightning Hania, too, recognized me. I saw that she clutched Selim desperately and that he said something to her. A few seconds

later I was so near that I could hear Selim's voice. "I'm armed," he cried in the darkness. "Don't come near, or I'll shoot!" But I minded nothing and drew nearer and nearer to them. "Stop!" cried Selim; "stop!" I was barely fifteen paces from them, but the road began to improve, and Selim again set his horses to a full gallop. The distance between us momentarily increased, but yet again I began to overtake them. Then Selim turned round and took aim with his pistol. He was angry, but he aimed quietly. A moment more and I should have caught hold of the gig with my hand. But suddenly a shot rang out . . . my horse plunged aside; leapt once and again, then knelt down on its forelegs; I raised it up, it sat down on its haunches and, breathing loud and heavily, sank to the ground together with me.

I jumped up at once and began to run as fast as I could on foot, but it was a vain effort. Quickly the gig got farther and farther away from me. Then I only saw it when the lightning tore the clouds apart. It disappeared in the distance and darkness like my last hope. I tried to shout. I couldn't. My breath failed me. The rolling of wheels receded into the distance. I stumbled over a stone and fell.

But a moment after I got up.

"They've driven off, driven off and disappeared!" I repeated aloud, and then I don't know what happened within me. I was helpless, alone amidst the night. That devil Mirza had conquered me. Oh, if Casimir hadn't gone with my father, if we'd chased them together; but now! "What'll happen, what'll happen now?" I cried aloud, so as to hear my own voice and so not go mad. And it seemed to me that the wind mocked me and whistled: "You're sitting by the wayside, without a horse, and he's there with her." And so the wind roared, and laughed, and chuckled. I returned slowly to my horse. From its nostrils there flowed a stream of black, coagulating blood, but it still lived, gasped, and turned its fading eyes upon me. I sat down beside it, leant my head on its side, and it seemed to me that I, too, was dying. And the wind whistled above me meanwhile, and laughed, and called: "He's there with her!" At times it seemed to me that I heard the devilish rolling of the gig's wheels as it fled into the darkness, carrying my happiness with it. And the wind whistled: "He's over there with her!" A strange stupor came over me. How long it lasted I know not. When I came to myself the storm was

already over. Bright flocks of small, light, whitish clouds raced across the sky, but in the spaces between them the blue heavens appeared, and the moon shone brightly. Damp mists rose from the fields. My dead horse, which was already cold, recalled to me everything that had happened. I looked about me to see where I was. To the right I saw little, distant lights in windows, so I hastened in that direction. It proved that I was just close to Ustrzyca.

I decided to go to the manor-house and see Mr. Ustrzycki, which I could the more easily do because Mr. Ustrzycki did not live in the manor itself, but had his little, separate abode, in which he usually stayed and slept. A light was still shining in his window. I knocked at the door. He opened to me himself, and shrank back in a fright.

"A farce!" said he. "What a sight you are, Henryk!"

"The lightning killed my horse just near Ustrzyca. I had nothing to do but to come here."

"In the name of the Father and of the Son! But you're wet through, chilled. And it's late now. A farce! I'll tell them to give you food and clothes."

"No! No! I want to go back at once."

"Oh, you do, do you? Why didn't Hania come? My wife leaves at two. We thought you'd send her for the night."

I suddenly decided to tell him everything, for I needed his aid.

"Sir," said I, "a misfortune has happened at our place. I count upon your telling nobody, neither your wife nor your daughter nor the governesses. The honour of our house is concerned."

I knew he would tell nobody, and anyhow I had but small hope that the affair could be concealed; so I preferred to warn him, so that if need were he could explain the matter. So I told him everything, except that I loved Hania myself.

"And so you must fight with Selim! A farce! What?" said he, having heard me to the end.

"Yes, I must. I want to fight at once, to-morrow. But even to-day I want to chase them farther, and so I beg you to give me at once the very best horses."

"You needn't chase them. They haven't driven any distance. They drove and drove by devious ways, and went back to Chorzele. Where would they have fled to? A farce! They went back to Chorzele, fell at old Mirza's feet! They had no other course. Old Mirza shut Selim up in the granary, and the

young lady . . . the young lady he will drive back to your place. A farce, eh? But Hania! Hania! Well!"

"Mr. Ustrzycki!"

"There, there, my child, don't get angry! I don't blame her. But it'll be another story with my women. But why do we waste time?"

"Oh, yes, let us waste no time."

Ustrzycki considered for a moment.

"Now I know what to do. I'll go to Chorzele at once, and you ride home, and you'd better wait there. If Hania's at Chorzele, I'll take her and drive her over to your place. Perhaps they won't give her to me, you say? A farce! But I'd rather old Mirza have me with him when we bring her over, for your father's a violent man. He'd be capable of challenging old Mirza, and it isn't the old man's fault, eh?"

"My father's away."

"All the better! All the better!"

Here Mr. Ustrzycki clapped his hands.

"Janek! Come here at once!"

His manservant came in.

"The gig harnessed here in ten minutes! Do you understand?"

"And horses for me?" said I.

"Others for this gentleman! A farce, sir!"

We kept silence for a while. After a little I said:

"Will you allow me to write to Selim? I prefer to challenge him by letter."

"Why?"

"I'm afraid old Mirza won't let him fight. He'll shut him up for a while and think that punishment enough. But it's too little for me, too little, too little! If Selim's already shut up you won't see him. It can't be done through the old man, but you might leave the letter with somebody. I won't tell my father either that I want to fight. He might challenge the old man, and the old man's innocent. But if I fight with Selim first there'll be no reason for that. And you yourself said that I must fight with him."

"I should say so! Fight! Fight! That's always the best way for a gentleman, and old or young, it's all the same. For any one else—a farce! But not for a gentleman. Well, write! You're in the right of it."

I sat down and wrote as follows:

"You're a villain. With the medium of this letter I slap

your face. If you don't present yourself to-morrow by Wach's hut with a pistol or broadsword, you 'll be the lowest of cowards, which you probably are."

I sealed the letter and gave it to Mr. Ustrzycki. Then we both went out into the courtyard, for gigs for us both had already driven up. Just before getting in one terrifying thought entered my head.

"Sir," said I to Ustrzycki, "and what if Selim didn't drive Hania to Chorzele?"

"If he didn't, he's gained time. It's night, there are fifty roads leading in all directions and . . . a wild-goose chase! But where 'd he have driven her to?"

"To N."

"A hundred and twelve miles with one set of horses? Make your mind easy! A farce, eh? Well, I 'll drive to N. to-morrow, or even to-day, but to Chorzele first. I tell you again, make your mind easy!"

An hour later I was at home. It was late at night, even very late, but lights twinkled everywhere. It was evident that people were running with candles from room to room. When my gig rumbled up before the porch the doors creaked, and Father Ludwik came into the hall with a candle in his hand.

"Sh- 'sh!" he whispered to me, putting a finger on his mouth.

"Hania?" I asked feverishly.

"Speak softer. Hania's here already. Old Mirza brought her back. Come to my room and I 'll tell you everything."

We went into Father Ludwik's room.

"What happened to you?"

"I chased them. Mirza shot my horse. Is my father here?"

"He came back just after old Mirza had driven away. Oh, what a misfortune, what a misfortune! The doctor is with him now. We thought he 'd get apoplexy. He wanted to ride off at once and challenge old Mirza. Don't go to your father in case you do him any harm. But to-morrow beg him not to challenge Mirza. It would be a mortal sin, and besides the old man's innocent. He gave Selim a beating and shut him up and brought Hania back himself. It was fortunate indeed that your father wasn't here."

So saying, Father Ludwik went in to my father, but I couldn't sit waiting in his room, and I ran to Hania. I didn't want to see her, oh, no! For that would have cost me too much. Rather, I wanted to make sure that she had really come back, that she

was once more safe, under our roof, near me, shielded from the storm and the terrible events of the day. Strange emotions shook me when I approached her room. Not anger, not hatred, but great grief, deep grief, did I feel in my heart, and a great, an inexpressible pity for that poor, unhappy victim of Selim's madness. I thought of her as of a dove that a hawk had carried off. Oh, how many humiliations the poor little thing must have suffered, what shame she must have passed through at Chorzele, before old Mirza! I immediately vowed to myself not to reproach her in the least, either to-day or ever, and to behave to her as if nothing had ever happened.

Just as I came to the door of her room that door opened, and old Wengrowska came out. I stopped her and asked:

"Is Miss Hania asleep?"

"No, poor soul," replied the old woman. "Oh, my dearest young master, if you had only seen what happened here! When the master shouted at Miss Hania" (here old Wengrowska raised her apron and began to wipe her tears away), "I thought that the poor thing would die on the spot. And she was so terrified and wet through. Oh, Jesus! Jesus!"

"Well, and how is she now?"

"You'll see that she'll pay for all this by an illness. It's lucky the doctor's close by."

I bade Wengrowska go back to Hania at once, and not shut the door behind her; for I wanted to look at her, even from a distance. Looking thus from the dark room through the open door I saw her sitting up in the bed, clothed in her nightdress. Her face was greatly flushed, her eyes were shining. I saw, too, that she was breathing quickly. Obviously she was feverish.

I hesitated for a while as to whether to go in or not; but just then Father Ludwik touched me on the arm.

"Your father's calling for you," he said.

"Father Ludwik, she's ill."

"The doctor'll go again to her at once. Meanwhile you'll have a talk with your father. Go, go! It's already late."

"What o'clock is it?"

"One in the morning."

I struck my forehead with my hand. Why, at five in the morning I had to fight Selim!

XI

AFTER my conversation with my father, which lasted about half an hour, I went back to my quarters, and didn't go to bed at all. I reckoned that to be at Wach's hut at five I must leave the house at latest at four, so I had not quite three hours before me. And besides, Father Ludwik soon came to see if I wasn't ill after that mad ride, and if I had changed properly after having been wet to the skin. But it was all one to me whether I was wet to the skin or not. Father Ludwik tried to induce me to go to bed at once, but he himself stayed, talking, and so an hour passed.

He told me more in detail about what old Mirza had said. It appeared from that account that Selim had simply acted madly, but, as he had told his father, he'd seen no other way out. He'd thought that after the elopement his father would have had nothing to do but bless them, and we could only give him Hania. It appeared, too, that just after his conversation with me, he had not only written to Hania, but had seen her, and that it was just then that he had persuaded her to elope. The girl, although she did not realize the consequences of this step, resisted instinctively with all her might; but Selim bewitched her with his entreaties and his love. He represented the flight to her as a simple drive to Chorzów, after which they would be for ever together and happy. He assured her that he would himself afterwards bring her back to us again, but already as his betrothed, that my father would agree to everything, that I should have to agree, and, what was more, that I should easily console myself with Lola Ustrzycka at Ustrzyca. Finally, he conjured Hania, he begged, he implored. He told her he would sacrifice everything for her, even life; that he would not survive separation; that he would drown himself, shoot himself, or poison himself. And then he threw himself at her feet, and so prevailed that the girl agreed to everything. But when the flight took place and they were off, Hania got frightened and began, with tears in her eyes, to implore him to return, but he wouldn't, for, as his father himself said, he was then oblivious to the whole world.

This was what old Mirza told Father Ludwik; and he told it perhaps because he wanted to prove that though Selim had dared to take this mad step, he had yet dared in good faith. Taking all this into consideration, Father Ludwik did not share

my father's anger, which was roused by Hania's ingratitude. According to the priest, Hania was not ungrateful, she had only gone astray through sinful, because earthly, love. For this reason Father Ludwik gave me some elevating instruction about earthly emotions, but I was not at all angry with Hania because her love was earthly; only I would have given my life for it to be differently directed than it was. I felt the greatest pity for Hania, and besides my heart had so grown to her that had I wished to tear it away I suppose I should have had to tear it in pieces. Further, I asked Father Ludwik to intercede with my father for her, and to explain to him her transgression, as he had explained it to me. Then I said good-bye to him, for I wanted to be alone.

When the priest had gone I took down from the wall that famous old sabre, bestowed upon me by my father, and pistols, so as to prepare for the morrow's meeting. About that meeting I had not hitherto had the time or the will to think. I wanted to fight to the death. That was all! As to Selim, I was convinced that he would not fail me. I carefully rubbed the sabre with soft wadding; on its broad, blue blade, in spite of its being some two hundred years old, there was not the slightest stain, though it had, in its day, notched helmets and armlets enough, drunk enough Swedish, Tartar, and Turkish blood. The golden inscription, "Jesus! Mary!" shone distinctly. I tried the cutting edge. It was as thin as the edge of a silk ribbon. The blue turquoises on the hilt seemed to smile as if begging my hand to grasp it and warm it.

Having finished with the sabre, I set about the pistols, for I didn't know which weapon Scim would choose. I oiled the locks and put oil on the wads for the bullets, then I carefully loaded both the pistols. Dawn had already come. It was three o'clock. Having finished my work, I threw myself into the arm-chair and began to meditate. From the course of events, and from what Father Ludwik had told me, one certainty emerged more and more distinctly, which was that I was not a little to blame for all that had taken place. I asked myself: Had I fulfilled as I ought the duty of guardianship laid upon me by old Nicholas? And I replied: "No!" Had I thought only of Hania, not of myself? I answered: "No!" About whom had I been concerned throughout the affair? Simply about myself. And moreover Hania, that gentle, defenceless being, had been among us like a dove in a nest of birds of prey.

I couldn't suppress within myself that very disagreeable thought, that Selim and I had torn her between us, like a piece of inviting prey, and in that struggle, in which the birds of prey were chiefly concerned for themselves, she, who was the least to blame, had suffered most. And now in a couple of hours we were to fight a final battle because of her. Disagreeable, painful were those thoughts. It appeared that our world of gentlefolk was too rough for Hania. My mother, unfortunately, had been long from home, and we men had too rough hands, and we had crushed that delicate flower, cast among us by fate. The guilt lay upon our whole house, and that guilt had to be effaced with my blood or Selim's.

I was ready for either eventuality.

Meanwhile daylight looked in more and more brightly at my window. Outside it, early swallows began to chirp their greeting to the dawn. I put out the candle that had been burning on the table: it was now nearly light. Half-past three struck emphatically in the drawing-room. "Well, it's time now!" thought I to myself, and, throwing a cloak over my shoulders to hide my weapons, in case any one met me, I left my quarters.

Passing by the house, I noticed that the main door from the hall, which was usually shut at night, and fastened with two iron bars, was already open. Evidently somebody had gone out of the house, so I should have to be very careful not to meet whoever it was. Slipping stealthily along the side of the courtyard, towards the lime avenue, I looked cautiously all about me, but it seemed to me as if everything around slept peacefully. But it was only when I was in the avenue that I boldly raised my head, sure now that nobody in the house would see me. The morning, after yesterday's storm, was most pure and lovely. The honeyed scent of the damp limes came strongly to my nostrils in the avenue. I turned to the left, towards the forge, the mills, and the dike, for I had to go that way to Wach's hut. Under the influence of the freshness and beauty of the morning, sleep and weariness fled far from me. I was full of a certain confidence, and, as it were, a sort of inward prescience told me that I should win in the fight which was soon to take place. It was true that Selim shot in a masterly fashion with pistols, but I shot no worse than he. It was true that he excelled me in skill in the use of the sabre, but again I was much stronger, so much so that he could scarcely hold out against

my passes. "Anyhow, let whatever happens happen," thought I. "Here's the end, and, if not the undoing, at any rate the cutting of this Gordian knot, which has cramped and choked me for so long." And besides, Selim, in good or bad faith as it might be, had done Hania a great wrong, and he must pay for that wrong.

Thus meditating, I reached the edge of the pond. Mist and vapours were descending from the air on the water. The coming of day painted the blue mirrors of the ponds with the colours of dawn. Early morning had but just begun; the air became more and more transparent, and everywhere all was fresh, fine, rosy, and silent; only from the reedy ponds there came to my ears the quacking of wild ducks. I was now near the sluice and the bridge, when suddenly I stopped as if rooted to the earth.

On the bridge stood my father, with his hands behind him, and an extinguished pipe in them. He stood leaning on the rail of the bridge and was looking, lost in thought, at the water and the dawn. Evidently, like myself, he couldn't sleep, and had gone out wishing to breathe the morning air and look at his husbandry.

I had not seen him at once, for I had walked at the side of the road, so that the willows hid the bridge rail from me; but I was not farther from him than ten paces. I hid myself behind a willow, not knowing at the moment what I was to do.

But my father kept standing there. Care and sleeplessness were pictured on his face. His eyes roamed over the pond, and he uttered his morning prayer. It reached my ears distinctly:

"Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." He continued it in a low voice, and then again said aloud: "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Amen."

I got impatient standing thus behind the willow and decided to steal quietly across the bridge. I might have done it, for my father was standing with his face turned to the water, and besides, as I have mentioned, he was a little deaf, for in the time of his military service the excessive roaring of artillery had deafened him. So, stepping cautiously, I was making my way across the bridge, beyond the further willows, but unfortunately the ill-fixed, rough-hewn planks of the bridge quivered, and my father looked round.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

I flushed the colour of a beet.

"Taking a stroll, father—only taking a stroll."

But my father approached me and, drawing the cloak with which I had covered myself so carefully a little aside, pointed to the sabre and pistols, and said:

"And what does this mean?"

There was no way out. I had to confess.

"I'll tell you everything now, father," said I. "I'm going to fight with Mirza."

I thought my father would burst out angrily, but, what I had not dared to hope, he did not, only asked:

"Who was the challenger?"

"I was."

"Without taking counsel with your father, without saying a word?"

"I challenged him yesterday, immediately after the chase at Ustrzyca. I couldn't, father, ask you about anything, and besides I was afraid you'd forbid it."

"And rightly! Go back home. Leave this whole affair to me."

My heart sank, more painfully, more despairingly than it had ever done.

"Father," said I, "I implore you by all that's holy to you, by the memory of my grandfather, don't forbid me to fight with the Tartar. I remember your calling me a democrat and being angry with me about it. But now I've remembered that my grandfather's blood and yours flows in my veins. Father, he wronged Hania, and is he to go scot-free? We mustn't let people say that our race let an orphan be wronged and did not avenge her! I'm greatly to blame; I loved her and didn't tell you, father, about it, but I swear that even had I not loved her, for the sake of her being an orphan and for that of our house and our name I would do the same I'm doing now. My conscience tells me that it's a noble thing to do—and you, father, won't deny that. But if it is as I say, a noble thing to do, I don't believe that you would forbid me to be noble, I don't believe it, father. Father, remember! Hania's been wronged and I was the challenger, I gave my word. I know that I'm not grown up yet, but hasn't a boy that isn't grown up the same self-respect, the same honour as a grown man? I challenged, I gave my word, and you often taught me that honour is the first law for a gentleman. I gave my word, father! Hania's been wronged, there's a stain on our house, and I gave my word. Father! Father!"

And pressing my lips to his hand, I burst out crying like a child. I almost prayed to my father; but then, as I spoke, his severe face softened and grew gentler; he looked upwards, and a great, heavy tear, a real fatherly tear, fell upon my brow. He fought a hard battle with himself, for I was the apple of his eye, and he loved me more than anything in the world; so he trembled for me, but at last he bent his grey head and said in a low, scarcely audible voice:

"May the God of your fathers lead you. Go and fight with the Tartar!"

We fell into each other's arms. My father pressed me to himself for a long while. He held me long to his breast. Then he shook himself free from his emotion, and said to me, resolutely and more cheerfully:

"Well, then, boy, fight till they hear it in heaven."

I kissed his hand.

"Will it be with pistols or with sabres?" asked he.

"He 'll choose."

"And the seconds?"

"There 'll be none. I trust him, and he me. What should we want seconds for?"

And again I cast myself upon his neck, for it was time for me to go. I went on a little way and looked round: my father still stood on the bridge, and made the sign of the cross over me from afar. The first rays of the rising sun, falling on his noble figure, surrounded it as with a gleaming aureole. And thus in the light, with uplifted hands, that grey-haired veteran looked to me like an old eagle blessing from afar its nestling that was going into that thunderous, winged life in which of old he had delighted.

Oh, my heart overflowed then! So great confidence and faith and zeal had I, that it not one, but ten Selims had awaited me at Wach's hut, I should have challenged the whole ten, to fight and see who was the best man.

At last I came to the hut. Selim awaited me on the edge of the wood. I confess that when I looked upon him I felt in my heart something like what the wolf feels when he looks upon his prey. We looked each other in the eyes menacingly and with curiosity. Selim had changed in the course of these two days: he had grown thin and become ugly, or perhaps it only seemed so to me. His eyes shone feverishly, the corners of his mouth quivered. We both went into the depths of the wood,

but all the way we said not a word to one another. Finally, we found a little clearing between pine trees. I stopped and said:

"Here. Do you agree?"

He nodded, and began to undo his coat, in order to take it off for the duel.

"Choose," said I, showing him the pistols and sabre.

He pointed to the sabre which he had with him. It was Turkish, highly curved at the point, of damascene work.

Meanwhile I had taken off my coat; he followed my example, but before doing so took a letter from the pocket.

"If I die give that to Miss Hania!"

"I won't take it."

"It isn't a love message but an explanation."

"Very well."

So speaking, we rolled up our shirt-sleeves. It was only now that my heart began to beat faster. Finally, Selim grasped the hilt; he straightened himself, he stood in the attitude of a fencer, challenging proudly, and holding his sabre horizontally above his head, and he said briefly:

"I'm ready!"

I took up the same position, leaning my sabre on his.

"Now?"

"Now!"

"Let us begin!"

I attacked him so fiercely that he even had to retreat a few steps, and moreover it was with difficulty that he withstood my sabre-blows. To each, however, he replied with so swift a pass that stroke and counter-stroke sounded almost simultaneously. His face became flushed. His nostrils dilated, his eyes became slanting, like a Tartar's, and began to emit lightning. For a while nothing was to be heard save the snarling of the blades, the dry sound of steel, and our whistling breath. Selim soon saw that if the fight was prolonged he must go under, for his strength and his lungs would fail him. Great drops of sweat came out on his brow, his breathing became more and more laboured. But also a kind of fury, the madness of battle, possessed him. His hair, disordered by his movements, fell forward on his forehead, in his open mouth gleamed white, clenched teeth. One would have said that, feeling the sabre in his hand, and scenting blood, the Tartar nature awoke in him and grew savage. And yet I had the advantage over him of equal rage and greater strength. Once already he had

failed to ward off a blow, and blood dripped from his left arm. After a few seconds the very point of my sabre touched his forehead. He was terrible then, with that red ribbon of blood mixed with sweat flowing down his face to his mouth and chin. It seemed to infuriate him. He jumped towards me and away from me like a wounded tiger. The point of his sabre writhed with the frightful swiftness of a fiery thunderbolt about my head, arms, and breast. It was with difficulty that I caught these furious blows on my sabre, and the more so because I was more concerned as to how to deal him blows. At times we came up so near to each other that our breasts almost knocked together. Suddenly Selim jumped backward, his sabre whistled close to my temples. But I beat off the blow with such force that Selim's head remained a moment uncovered. I aimed a blow that could have cloven it in two and . . . it was as though suddenly a thunderbolt struck my skull. I cried "Jesus! Mary!", my sabre fell from my hand, and, as though felled to the ground, I fell face downward to the earth.

XII

WHAT happened to me for a long time afterwards I neither know nor remember. When I came to myself I was lying on my back in my father's room and in his bed, while my father sat by me in an arm chair, his head leaning back, pale, with half-shut eyes. The shutters were closed, candles burned on the table, and in the great silence that reigned in the room I heard only the whisper-like ticking of the clock. For some time I looked vaguely at the ceiling, and collected my lazy thoughts, then I tried to move; but an intolerable pain in my head hindered me. This pain somewhat recalled to me all that had happened, so I said in a low, weak voice:

"Father!"

My father started, then bent over me. Joy mingled with solicitude was expressed on his face, and he said:

"My God, I thank Thee! He's regained consciousness. What, my son? What?"

"Father, I fought with Selim?"

"Yes, my dear boy. Don't think of it!"

Silence reigned for a moment, and then I asked:

"Father, and who brought me here to this room from the wood?"

"I brought you in my arms, but don't speak, don't tire yourself."

But five minutes hadn't passed before I began to question him again. Only, I spoke very slowly.

"Father!"

"What, my child?"

"And what became of Sehm?"

"He, too, fainted from loss of blood. I had him driven to Chorzele."

I wanted to ask about Hania and my mother, but I felt that consciousness was leaving me again. It seemed to me that black and yellow dogs began to dance on their hind legs round my bed, and I began to stare at them. Then again I dreamt that I heard the sound of peasants' pipes, and at times I would see, instead of the face of the clock which hung opposite my bed, a face, looking down from the wall and hiding itself, by turns. It was not a state of complete unconsciousness, only of feverishness and scattered thoughts, but it must have lasted for a considerable time. Sometimes I was a little better, and then I distinguished the faces that surrounded my bed; my father's, or Father Ludwik's, or Casimir's, or Doctor Stan's. I remember that I missed one face, but I couldn't think which; but I know that I felt the lack and instinctively sought that face. Once in the night, having gone sound asleep, I woke up towards morning. Candles were still burning on the table. I felt very, very weak. Suddenly I noticed, bending over my bed, a person whom I did not at first recognize, but the sight of whom made me feel as exquisitely happy as if I had died and been taken to Heaven. It was an angelic face, so angelic, so holy, with tears flowing quietly from its eyes, that I felt as if I should cry too. But then the spark of consciousness came back to me, things became clear before my eyes, and I called out weakly and in a low voice:

"Mother!"

The angelic face bent towards my emaciated hands, lying motionless on the coverlet, and pressed its lips to them. I tried to raise myself, but again I felt the pain in my temples, so I only cried:

"Mother! It hurts!"

My mother, for she it was, began to change the ice compresses that lay on my head. This dressing always caused me no little suffering, but now those sweet, beloved hands moved with such

careful delicacy about my poor, hewn head that, not feeling the least pain, I began to whisper:

"Oh, that 's good! That 's good!"

From that time forward I was more conscious. It was only towards evening that I became feverish. Then I would see Hania, although when I was conscious I never saw her near me. But I saw her always in some danger. Once a wolf with red eyes rushed at her. Again somebody carried her off, like Selim, but not Selim, for he had a face overgrown with black bristles and horns on his head. At such times I would cry out and sometimes I would beg the wolf or the horned creature very courteously and humbly not to run away with her. Then my mother would put her hand on my forehead, and the nightmare dreams would at once disappear.

At last the fever definitely left me. I became quite conscious, but that did not mean that I was better. Complications ensued, extreme weakness, beneath which I seemed to be going out like a candle. For whole days and nights I kept looking at one point on the ceiling. I was, indeed, conscious, but indifferent to everything. Nothing mattered to me—life or death, all the people who were watching round my bed. I received impressions, I saw everything that went on around me; I remembered everything, but I hadn't strength enough to collect my thoughts or to feel. Once in the evening I apparently began to die. A great, yellow candle was placed near my bed, then I saw Father Ludwik in his surplice. He gave me the Blessed Sacrament, then anointed me with the Holy Oils, and, as he did so, he sobbed so that he nearly lost consciousness. My mother was carried out of the room fainting; Casimir simply howled, sitting by the wall, and tore his hair; my father sat, with clenched hands, like a figure of stone. I saw all that, but I was absolutely indifferent and looked as usual with dead, glassy eyes at the ceiling, at the rail of the bed, at my feet, or at the window, through which shone milky and silvery sheaves of moonlight.

Then the household servants began to come into the room by every door; cries, sobs, and howling, which were led by Casimir, filled the whole room. My father alone sat as before in stony grief. But finally, when every one knelt down, and the priest began to say a litany and couldn't, for tears cut it short, my father suddenly leapt up, and shouting, "Oh, Jesus, Jesus!" cast himself full length on the floor. At that moment I felt that the ends of my fingers and toes began to get cold. A

strange drowsiness came over me and a desire to yawn. "Oho! then I'm dying," thought I, and fell asleep.

But I really went to sleep instead of dying. And I slept so well that I only awoke twenty-four hours later. I woke so much stronger that I couldn't realize what had happened to me. My indifference had disappeared, my strong, young organism had conquered death itself, and awakened me to new life, with new strength. Now, again, there took place round my bed such scenes of joy as I will not try to describe. Casimir simply went wild with happiness. I was told later that immediately after the duel, when my father carried me home wounded, and the doctor at the time didn't guarantee that I should live, good old Casimir had to be shut up, for he simply went hunting Selim as if he were a wild beast, and swore that if I died he would shoot him at sight. Luckily Selim, who had been slightly wounded, had to keep his bed for some time.

But meanwhile every day brought an increasing improvement in my condition. The will to live came back to me. My father, my mother, Father Ludwik, and Casimir watched day and night over my bed. How I loved them then, how I yearned after them, when any one of them left my room! But as life came back, my former sentiments towards Hania began once more to call out in my heart. When I awoke from that sleep, which every one had thought would be the beginning of endless sleep, I at once asked about Hania. My father answered that she had gone away to be with Madame d'Yves and my little sisters at my uncle's, as smallpox was more and more prevalent in the village. He told me, too, that he had already pardoned her, and begged me to make my mind easy. Later on, however, I sometimes spoke of her to my mother, who, seeing that this subject interested me more than any other, would herself begin to talk about it, and would end with angelic, though vague, assurances that when I got well she would talk to my father about many things which would be very pleasant for me to hear, only I must be quiet and try to get well as quickly as possible.

So saying, she would smile sadly, and I would feel like crying for joy. But at times something would happen in the house to disturb my peace, and even fill me with fear. Once, for instance, in the evening, when my mother was sitting by me, Franek, the man-servant, came in and asked her to come to Hania's room.

"Has Hania come?" I asked.

"No," replied my mother, "she hasn't come. He called me to her room because they're whitewashing and repapering it."

At times it would seem to me that a kind of cloud of painful and ill-concealed sadness lay upon the brows of those around me. I understood nothing of what was going on, and my questions were lightly evaded. I questioned Casimir; he answered like the others that my sisters, Madame d'Yves, and Hania would soon return, and, finally, that I was to keep quiet.

"And why are you all so sad?" I asked.

"Well, you see, I'll tell you everything. Selim and old Mirza keep coming here every day. Selim despairs and cries whole days on end, wants absolutely to see you: but father and mother are afraid that his visit would harm you."

I smiled.

"Clever Selim!" said I. "He nearly clove my skull in two, and now he's crying about it. And tell me, does he keep thinking of Hania?"

"Oh! . . . she's not in his mind at all! Anyhow, I don't know, I didn't ask, but I think he's given her up now altogether."

"That's a question."

"In any case somebody else'll get her, not he. You can be easy about that!"

Here Casimir grimaced schoolboy fashion, and added with a roguish look:

"I even know who. Only God grant that — —"

"That what?"

"That she comes back very soon," he added hastily.

These words completely calmed me. A few days later my father and my mother were sitting by me in the evening. My father and I began to play chess. After a moment my mother went out, leaving the door open, through which could be seen a series of rooms, and at the end of that series was Hania's. I looked at it, but could see nothing, for all the rooms except mine were dark, and the door of Hania's room was closed, so far as I could see in the darkness.

Suddenly someone, rather like Doctor Stanislaus, went into it and didn't shut the door behind him.

My heart beat uneasily: there was a light in Hania's room.

That light fell, a bright streak, into the dark room adjoining, and on the background of that streak it seemed to me that I perceived a light whorl of smoke, twirling like dust does in the sunlight.

Gradually my sense of smell perceived a faint odour, which, however, every moment became stronger and stronger. Suddenly my hair stood up on my head, I distinguished the smell of juniper.

"Father, what is it?" I cried violently, throwing the chessmen and chess-board to the floor.

My father jumped up, confused, and, perceiving also that accursed smell, shut the door of the room as quickly as he could.

"It's nothing—nothing!" he answered hastily.

But I was already on my feet, and although I still staggered I made my way quickly towards the door.

"Why are they burning juniper there?" I cried. "I want to go there."

My father seized me round the waist.

"You shan't go there, you shan't. I forbid you!"

Despair came over me, and, clutching at the bandages that were round my head, I cried excitedly:

"All right! But I swear that I'll tear off these bandages and scratch open my wound with my own hands. Hania's dead! I want to see her!"

"Hania's not dead, I give you my word," cried my father, seizing my hands and struggling with me. "She's been ill, but she's better. Calm yourself! Haven't we had misfortunes enough? I'll tell you everything, but lie down. You can't go to her. You'd kill her. Calm yourself! Lie down! I swear she's better."

My strength left me, and I fell on to the bed, repeating only:

"My God! My God!"

"Henryk, recollect yourself! Are you a woman? Be brave! She's no longer in danger. I've promised to tell you everything and I will, on condition that you gather your strength together. Lean your head on the pillow. There! That way! Cover yourself, and lie quietly!"

I obeyed.

"Now I'm quiet, but quick, father. quick! I want to know everything at last. Is she really better? What was the matter with her?"

"Well, then, listen! That night when Selim made off with her there was a storm. Hania had nothing on her but a light frock, and she was wet to the skin. Besides, that mad step cost her no little. In Chorzele, where Mirza took her, she had nothing to change into, so she came back here in that same wet frock. That same day she got shivers and high fever. Next

day old Wengrowska couldn't hold her tongue, and told her what had happened to you—even said you'd been killed. Of course, that did her harm. That evening she was already unconscious. For a long time the doctor didn't know what was the matter with her, till, finally . . . you know there was and still is smallpox all over the village. Hania had smallpox."

I closed my eyes, for I thought I'd lose consciousness too. At last I said:

"Go on, father, for I'm calm."

"There were times," went on my father, "of great danger. That very same day when we thought you were gone she was almost dying. But the crisis passed happily for both of you. Now she is, like you, convalescent. In about a week she'll be quite well. But what a time there was in the house! What a time!"

My father had concluded, and looked hard at me as if fearing that his words had shaken my still weak mind too much; but I lay motionless. For a long time there was silence. I was collecting my thoughts and looking this new misfortune in the face. My father stood up and began to stride about the room, glancing at me from time to time.

"Father!" I said after a long silence.

"What, boy?"

"Is she—is she—very much disfigured?"

My voice was calm and quiet, but my heart beat loud in my ears as I awaited the reply.

"Yes," replied my father, "as usual after smallpox. Perhaps no marks will remain. They're still there now, but they'll disappear; no doubt, they'll disappear."

I turned my face to the wall: I felt that I was getting worse. But a week later I was already up, and in a fortnight I saw Hania. Oh, I won't even try to describe what had happened to that lovely, ideal face. When the poor little thing came out of her room, and when I saw her for the first time, although I had sworn to myself beforehand not to show the least emotion, I felt suddenly ill, and collapsed in a dead faint. Oh, how dreadfully she was disfigured!

When I had been revived Hania was crying aloud, for herself, no doubt, and for me, for I was still more like a shadow than a man.

"It's all my fault," she repeated, sobbing. "My fault!"

"Hania, dear, my little sister, don't cry. I'll always love you!"

I cried and, seizing her hands, would have raised them to my lips as I had used to do.

But suddenly I started and drew back. Those hands, once so white, delicate, and lovely, were dreadful now. They were quite covered with black spots, and besides were roughish, almost disgusting.

"I'll always love you," I repeated with an effort.

I lied. In my heart there was an immense, fearful pity, and brotherly love, but my former feeling had flown away as a bird flies, leaving not a trace behind.

I went into the garden and, in that same hop arbour where Selim and Hania had first avowed their love for each other, I wept as one weeps after the death of someone dear.

For the former Hania had actually died for me, or rather, my love had died, and there remained behind in my heart only a void and pain that was like the ache of an unhealed wound, and memories that drew tears from my eyes.

I sat a long while thus. The quiet autumn evening began to burn with the red hues of sunset over the tops of the trees. They looked for me in the house. At last my father came into the arbour.

He looked at me and respected my grief.

"Poor boy!" said he. "God has tried you severely, but He always knows what He does."

I leaned my head on my father's breast, and for a little while we were both silent.

After a few moments my father said:

"You were very much attached to her; so tell me, if I said, 'I give her to you, take her hand for your whole life,' how would you answer me?"

"Father," I replied. "Love may have fled from me, but honour never: I'm ready."

My father kissed me affectionately.

"God bless you, I see what you are. But it's not your duty, not your obligation. It's Selim's."

"Will he come here?"

"He'll come with his father. His father knows all about it now."

Somewhere about the twilight hour Selim came. When he saw Hania he flushed, and then went white as a sheet. For a moment a hard struggle between his heart and his conscience displayed itself on his face. It was obvious that the winged

bird called love had flown away from him too. But he conquered himself, did that noble boy! He stood up, stretched out his arms, and then fell on his knee before Hania and cried:

"My Hania! I'm always of the same mind. I'll never forsake you—never, never!"

Abundant tears flowed down Hania's cheeks, but she lightly repulsed Selim.

"I don't believe, I don't believe that any one could love me now," she said, and then, covering her face with her hands, she cried:

"Oh, how good and noble you all are! I only am the least noble, the most sinful; but it's all over now; I'm a different person now."

And in spite of all Mirza's persuasions, in spite of Selim's petitions, she wouldn't give him her hand. Life's first storm had broken that lovely flower, that was but just blown. Poor girl! She needed now after the storm some holy, quiet haven, where she could soothe her conscience and lull her heart.

And she found indeed that quiet, holy haven. She became a Sister of Mercy.

A few years later, however, I saw her unexpectedly. Her angelic features were calm and quiet. The traces of her terrible illness had completely disappeared. In her black dress and white nun's cap she looked beautiful as never before, but it was an unearthly beauty, more angelic than human.

A COMEDY OF ERRORS

A SKETCH OF AMERICAN LIFE

Translated by H. E. KENNEDY and Z. UMIŃSKA

INTRODUCTION

THE events which are to serve me as the subject of this sketch actually, it appears, took place in a little American town. Whether it was in the east or the west I have not been able to discover, and, as a matter of fact, that 's no concern of anybody's. Perhaps, too, some American or German story-writer has already used the subject, which, in my opinion, should be as indifferent a matter to my readers as the question of locality.

Availing myself of an author's licence, I relate the affair as if it happened in California. In doing so I will try to sketch in some characteristic features of the life in small towns there.

FIVE or six years ago, in the Mariposa district, a paraffin well was discovered in a certain locality. The immense profits which similar wells bring with them in Nevada induced some company promoters to form a company for the purpose of exploiting the newly-discovered springs. Various machines, pumps, cranes, ladders, tuns, barrels, bores, and boilers were conveyed there. Houses were built for the workmen, the locality was christened "Struck-Oil," and after a while, in this empty, unpeopled neighbourhood which a year before had been inhabited only by coyotes, there was a settlement consisting of some fifty to sixty houses, inhabited by a few hundred workmen.

Two years later Struck-Oil was already called "Struck-Oil City," and indeed it was already a "city" in the fullest sense of the word. Please note that now there lived there a shoemaker, a tailor, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a butcher, and a French doctor who, in his time, had shaved chins in France, but anyhow was a "learned man" and harmless, which is a great deal to say of an American doctor.

The doctor, as most frequently happens in small towns, also kept the chemist's shop and the post office. So he had three professions. He was as harmless a pharmacist as he was a doctor, for in his pharmacy there were to be found but two medicines, namely, julep and laurel drops. This quiet, gentle old man was wont to say to his patients:

"Never be afraid of my medicines. My custom when I give a sick person medicine is to take the same dose myself, for I argue that if it doesn't hurt a healthy man it won't hurt a sick one either. Eh?"

"That's so," would reply the reassured citizens, to whom it never occurred that it's a doctor's duty not only not to harm a patient, but to cure him.

Mr. Dasonville—fo, such was the doctor's name—had, however, special faith in the wonderful effects of laurel drops. Often at meetings he took off his hat and, turning to the public, said: "Ladies and gentlemen, give laurel drops a trial! I'm seventy years of age; I've been taking laurel drops for forty years: and look, I haven't one grey hair on my head!"

The ladies and gentlemen might have observed again that the doctor hadn't indeed a single grey hair, but then, he had none at all, for his head was as bald as a lamp-shade. But as a remark of the kind would in no way have tended to increase the growth of Struck-Oil City, it was not made at all.

Meanwhile Struck-Oil City grew and grew. At the end of two years a branch railway was constructed to it. The town now had its elected officials. The doctor, who was universally liked, became, as representing the educated class, the judge. The shoemaker, who was a Polish Jew, Mr. Devis (David), was the sheriff, that is, the chief of police, which force was composed of the sheriff and no one else. A school was built, which was presided over by a "school marm," a maiden of uncertain age, who had a perpetually swollen face. Finally, the first hotel was built, and named "The United States Hotel."

"Business" became extremely brisk. The export of petroleum brought in fine profits. It was observed that Mr. Devis had a glazed shop-front, like those of the San Francisco shoemakers, erected before his stall. At the next meeting the citizens bestowed public thanks upon Mr. Devis for this "new ornament to the town," upon which Mr. Devis replied with the modesty of a great citizen: "Thank you, thank you! *Ai vai!*"

Where a judge and a sheriff are there are cases. That

necessitates writing and paper, so at the corner of Coyote Street, at number one, there arose a stationery shop, in which there were also sold political newspapers and caricatures, representing Grant under the form of a boy milking a cow, which, in its turn, was to represent the United States. The sheriff's duties did not in any way compel him to forbid the sale of drawings of this kind, for that was not the business of the police.

But that wasn't the end. An American town can't live without a newspaper. So when another year had passed, a journal called the *Saturday Weekly Review* came into being, and it had as many subscribers as there were inhabitants of Struck-Oil City. The editor of this paper was also its publisher, printer, manager, and distributor. This latter duty was the more easy to him inasmuch as he kept cows besides, and every morning had to bring milk round to the houses. Nor did it prevent him from beginning the leading articles with the words: "If our vile President of the United States took the advice we gave him in our last issue"; and so forth.

So, as we see, there was nothing lacking in that blessed Struck-Oil City. Moreover, as oil-miners are not characterized by either violence or the rude manners proper to gold-miners, it was quiet in the town. Nobody fought with anybody, lynching wasn't even mentioned. Life flowed on quietly; one day was as like another as one drop of water is to another. In the morning everybody was engaged in business, in the evening they burned rubbish in the streets, and, if there was no meeting, went to bed, knowing that they would burn rubbish next day too.

The only thing that worried the sheriff was that he couldn't teach the citizens not to shoot off their guns at the wild geese which, in the evening, flew over the town. The urban laws forbade shooting off guns in the streets. "If it had been some lousy little town," the sheriff would repeat, "I'd not say a word. But to have 'pif paf, pif paf' in such a big town, is most unfitting."

The citizens listened, nodded, replied "Oh, yes!" but when in the evening on the rosy sky the grey and white lines of geese appeared, making their way from the mountains to the ocean, every one forgot his promise, seized his gun, and the fusillade began in full strength. Mr. Devis could, indeed, have brought each culprit before the judge, and the judge could have fined him, but we mustn't forget that the culprits were also the patients of the doctor and, in case of shoes wearing out, the

customers of the sheriff. And as one hand washes the other, so one hand does not injure the other.

So it was as quiet in Struck-Oil City as in heaven. But suddenly those halcyon days came to an end. The man-grocer conceived a mortal hatred for the woman-grocer, and the woman-grocer for the man-grocer.

Here we must explain what is called a grocery. A grocery, then, or grocer's store, is a shop where everything is sold. You can get there flour, hats, cigars, brooms, buttons, rice, sardines, shirts, bacon, seeds, blouses, trousers, lamp-shades, hatchets, biscuits, plates, paper collars, and dried fish—in a word, everything a man can require. In the beginning there was only one grocery in Struck-Oil City. It was kept by a German, Hans Kasche by name. He was just a phlegmatic German, a native of Russia. He was thirty-five and had goggle eyes. He was not corpulent, but just fairly stout. He always went about without his coat, and he was never without a pipe in his teeth. He knew just as much English as he required for business, and not a jot more. Still, he did a good trade, so that at the end of a year it was already said in Struck-Oil City that he "was worth several thousand dollars."

But suddenly a second grocery made its appearance.

And, strangely enough, while the first was kept by a German man, the second was founded by a German woman. "*Kunegunde und Eduard, Eduard und Kunegunde!*" So at once war broke out between the parties, and it began by Miss Neuman, or, as she called herself, Newman, serving at her housewarming lunch cakes baked with flour mixed with soda and alum. This would have injured Miss Neuman herself most had she not maintained and produced witnesses to prove that, since her flour was not yet unpacked, she had bought it from Hans Kasche. So the result was that Hans Kasche was envious and a villain, who wished at the very outset to ruin his rival in public opinion. Anyhow it was to be foreseen that the two groceries would be rivals to each other, but nobody foresaw that this rivalry would become a terrible personal hatred. This hatred soon went so far that Hans only burnt rubbish when the wind blew the smoke into his adversary's shop, and the adversary never called Hans anything but "Dutchman," which the latter looked upon as the greatest of insults. At the beginning the inhabitants laughed at them both, the more so because neither of them knew English; but gradually, as the result of daily

dealings with the groceries, two parties were formed in the town: Hansists and Neumanists, who began to look askance at one another, which fact might well be a hindrance to the happiness and quietude of Struck-Oil City, and might cause menacing complications in the future. That profound politician, Mr. Devis, wished to cure the evil at its source, so he tried to reconcile the German with his fellow-countrywoman. He would stand in the middle of the street and say to them in their native language:

"There, why should you quarrel? Don't you buy your shoes from the same shoemaker? I have some now, than which you will find no better in the whole of San Francisco."

"It's useless to praise shoes to one who'll soon go barefoot," Miss Neuman would interrupt sourly.

"I don't make capital out of my feet," replied Hans, phlegmatically.

Now you must know that Miss Neuman, although she was a German, had really pretty feet; so sneers of this kind filled her heart with mortal anger.

In the town the two parties had already begun to moot the matter of Hans and Miss Neuman at meetings. But since in America nobody with a case against a woman will get justice, the majority were on Miss Neuman's side.

Soon Hans perceived that his grocery barely paid him.

But neither did Miss Neuman do too successful business, for again all the women in the town took Hans's side. For they noticed that their husbands were too frequent customers of the beautiful German woman, and that each time when they went to buy they stayed too long in her shop.

When there was nobody in either of the groceries Hans and Miss Neuman would stand in their doorways opposite each other, casting at each other looks full of fury. Miss Neuman would then hum to the tune of *Mein lieber Augustin*:

"Dutchman, Dutchman, Du-Dutchman, Du-Dutchman-man!"

Mr. Hans would look at her feet, then at her figure, then at her face, with the same expression with which he would have looked at a coyote which had been killed a month ago; then, bursting into demoniac laughter, he would cry:

"By God!"

Hatred reached such a height in that phlegmatic man that when in the morning he appeared in the doorway and Miss Neuman wasn't there, he would fidget about as if he missed something.

There would long ago have been active hostilities between the two, had it not been for the fact that Hans was certain he would lose in any law case, and the more so because Miss Neuman had an adherent in the person of the editor of the *Saturday Weekly Review*. Hans found this out when he spread the news that Miss Neuman had an artificial bust. It was a probable enough thing, for it was a universal custom in America. But the next week there appeared in the *Saturday Weekly Review* a thundering article in which the editor, writing in general of slanders by "Dutchmen," concluded with a solemn assurance that the bust of a certain calumniated lady was real.

Theneforth Mr. Hans drank every morning black coffee instead of coffee with milk, for he didn't wish to take milk from the editor, but, on the other hand, Miss Neuman took twice as much milk as usual. Besides this she ordered a frock from the tailor, the bodice of which was so formed as finally to convince every one that Hans was a slanderer.

Hans felt himself helpless in the face of feminine hatred; and meanwhile his lady compatriot, standing before the shop every morning, would sing ever louder:

"Dutchman, Dutchman, Du-Dutchman, Du-Dutchman-man."

"What can I do to her?" thought Hans. "I have poisoned wheat for rats; maybe I might poison her chickens. No! They'd make me pay! But I know what I'll do!"

And in the evening Miss Neuman, to her great surprise, perceived Mr. Hans carrying bunches of wild sunflowers and arranging them so as to form a path to the barred window of his cellar. "I'm curious what that's going to be," she thought to herself. "Certainly something against me!" Meanwhile it grew dark. Mr. Hans had placed the sunflowers in two lines, so that there only remained in the middle a free path to the window of the cellar. Then he carried out some object covered with linen, turned his back to Miss Neuman, took the linen off the mysterious object, covered it with sunflower leaves, then approached the wall and began to trace some letters on it.

Miss Neuman was dying of curiosity.

"He's certainly writing something against me," she thought. "But as soon as ever everybody goes to bed, I'll go and see, even if I were to die for it."

Hans, having finished his work, went upstairs and soon put the light out. Then Miss Neuman hastily threw on a dressing-gown, put slippers on her bare feet, and set forth across the

street. Having reached the sunflowers, and wanting to read the inscription on the wall, she went straight up the path to the window. Suddenly her eyes bulged, she threw the upper part of her body backwards, and there issued from her mouth first of all a painful "Ow! Ow!" and then a despairing cry: "Help! Help!"

The upper window was raised.

"*Was ist das?*" sounded quietly in Hans's voice. "*Was ist das?*"

"Accursed Dutchman," screamed the young lady. "You've murdered me, ruined me! You shall hang to-morrow. Help! Help!"

"I'll be down in a minute," said Hans.

And in a moment he appeared, candle in hand. He looked at Miss Neuman, who stood as if rooted to the earth, then put his hands on his hips and began to laugh.

"What's this? Is it Miss Neuman? Ha! Ha! Ha! Good evening, Miss. Ha! Ha! Ha! I set a trap for skunks and I caught you! Why did you come to look into my cellar? I specially wrote a warning on the wall to prevent any one coming near. Now shout! Let folk come running. Let every one see that you come at night to look into the Dutchman's cellar! *O mein Gott!* Shout, but stand there till the morning. Good night, miss, good night!"

Miss Neuman's position was frightful. Shout? Folk would come running. She would be compromised. Not shout? To stand all night in a trap and to be a sight for every one next day! And besides her foot hurt more and more. She got giddy, the stars mingled with each other, the moon with Mr. Hans's menacing face. She fainted.

"*Herr Jesu!*" exclaimed Hans to himself. "If she dies they'll lynch me to-morrow without a trial!"

And his hair stood on end with fright.

There was no way out. Hans sought the key as quickly as he could to open the trap, but it was difficult to open, for Miss Neuman's dressing-gown was in the way. It had to be undone a little and . . . in spite of all his hatred, Hans couldn't restrain himself from casting a glance at the beautiful little feet of his enemy that looked, in the light of the red moon, as if carved in marble.

One might have said that there was now pity mingled with his hatred. He quickly opened the trap and, as the young lady did not move, he lifted her up in his arms and bore her

quickly to her house. On the way he again felt pity. Then he went back to his own place, and couldn't shut an eye the whole night.

Next morning Miss Neuman didn't appear before her grocery to sing "Dutchman, Dutchman, Du-Dutchman, Du-Dutchman."

Perhaps she was ashamed, and perhaps she was silently plotting vengeance.

It became evident that she was plotting vengeance. The evening of that very day the editor of the *Saturday Weekly Review* challenged Hans to box with him, and, at the very beginning of it, gave him a black eye. But Hans, driven to despair, gave him so many terrible blows, that after a short and vain resistance, the editor fell full length on the ground crying, "Enough! Enough!"

In some unknown way, for not through Hans, the whole town got to know about Miss Neuman's nocturnal accident. After the fight with the editor, pity for his enemy disappeared from Hans's heart and hatred alone remained.

Hans had a feeling that some unexpected blow from the hated hand would fall upon him. And really he hadn't long to wait for it. The owners of groceries often stick up before their establishments advertisements of various kinds of goods, and these usually have the heading: "Notice!" Again you must know that groceries usually sell ice, without which no American drinks either whisky or beer. Well, suddenly Hans observed that people had completely stopped buying ice from him. The immense chunks he brought from the railway melted in the cellar in which he had placed them. The damage amounted to about fifteen dollars. Why? How? What? Hans saw that even his partisans daily bought ice from Miss Neuman; so he couldn't understand what it meant, the more because he hadn't fallen out with any public-house keeper.

He decided to clear the matter up.

"Why don't you buy ice from me?" he asked in broken English of the public-house keeper, Peters, who was just passing his shop.

"Because you don't keep it."

"What? I don't keep it?"

"Well, I know you don't."

"*Aber* I do keep ice."

"Then what's that?" asked the public-house keeper, pointing to a notice which was stuck up on the house.

Hans looked, and went green with rage. Somebody had scratched out from the advertisement the letter "t" in the word "notice," so that "notice" became "no ice."

"*Donnerwetter!*" shouted Hans, and, blue in the face, and trembling, he rushed into Miss Neuman's shop.

"This is villainy!" he cried, foaming. "Why did you scratch me out a letter from the middle?"

"What did I scratch out of your middle?" asked Miss Neuman, mischievously pretending to be stupid.

"The letter 't', I say. You scratched out 't.' *Aber Goddam*, this can't go on. You must pay me for the ice! *Goddam!*"

And losing his usual cold-bloodedness, he began to scream like one possessed. Upon this Miss Neuman began to shout. People came running.

"Help!" called Miss Neuman. "The Dutchman has gone mad! He says I scratched something out of his inside. And I didn't scratch anything. What should I scratch? I didn't scratch anything. Oh, Lord, I'd have scratched out his eyes if I could, but nothing more. I'm a poor woman, alone! He'll kill me, murder me on the spot!"

Thus shouting, she dissolved into floods of tears. The Americans didn't understand what was the matter, but they can't bear woman's tears. So they went for the German and put him out of doors. He would have resisted, but he hadn't a chance. He was shot out like a stone from a sling, across the street and through his own door, and he fell full length.

A week later an immense pictorial signboard hung over his shop. This signboard showed a monkey dressed in a striped frock and a white apron with shoulder-straps. Just like Miss Neuman! Underneath there was an inscription in great, yellow letters:

"At the sign of the monkey!"

People assembled to look. Laughter lured Miss Neuman to her door. She came out, looked, paled, but not losing her presence of mind cried out at once:

"At the sign of the monkey! Nothing strange in that, since Mr. Kasche lives there. Ha!"

But the blow had struck her to the heart. At noon she would hear crowds of children passing the shops on their way home from school stop before the sign, crying:

"Oh, that's Miss Neuman! Good evening, Miss Neuman!"

It was too much. When the editor came to see her in the evening, she said to him:

"That monkey's I. I know it's I, but I won't give in. He must take it down and lick out that monkey with his own tongue before me."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to the judge at once."

"What? At once?"

"To-morrow."

She went out early in the morning and, approaching Hans, said:

"Listen, Mr. Dutchman! I know that monkey's I. But come with me to the judge. Let's see what he'll say."

"He'll say I can paint whatever I like over my shop."

"We'll soon see about that."

Miss Neuman could scarcely breathe.

"And how do you know that that monkey is you?"

"My conscience tells me so. Come, come to the judge, or the sheriff'll bring you to him in chains."

"All right, I'll come," said Hans, sure he would win.

They closed their shops and went, abusing each other on the way. It was only at Judge Dasonville's very door that they remembered that neither of them knew enough English to explain the matter. What was to be done? Oh, the sheriff, being a Polish Jew, knew both German and English. Forward to the sheriff!

But the sheriff had just got into a cart and was about to drive away.

"Go to the devil!" he shouted quickly. "The whole town is disturbed through you. You wear the same shoes for years on end! I'm off for lumber. Good bye!"

And he drove off.

Hans put his hands on his hips.

"You'll have to wait till to-morrow, miss," he said phlegmatically.

"I'll have to wait? I'll die first! Unless you take down the monkey."

"I won't take down the monkey."

"Then you'll hang! You'll hang, you Dutchman, you! We'll do without the sheriff. The judge knows what it's about anyhow."

"Then let's go and do without the sheriff," said the German.

But Miss Neuman was mistaken. Of all the townsfolk the judge alone knew nothing whatever of their quarrel. The innocent old man was mixing his laurel drops and thinking he was saving the world. He received them, as he was wont to receive every one, kindly and courteously.

"Show me your tongues, my children!" said he. "I'll prescribe for you at once."

They both began to make signs that they didn't want medicine. Miss Neuman repeated: "It's not that we want—not that."

"Then what?"

They both talked together. For every word Hans said the lady said ten. Finally, the woman thought of pointing to her heart as a sign that Mr. Hans had pierced it with sorrow.

"I understand. Now I understand!" said the doctor.

Then he opened a book and began to write. He asked Hans how old he was. "Thirty-five." He asked the young lady—she didn't remember exactly. "Oh, somewhere about twenty-five." "All right!" "What were their Christian names?" "Hans." "Lora." "All right!" "What was their profession?" "They had groceries." "All right!" Then some other questions. Neither understood, but they answered: Yes. The doctor nodded. It was all over.

He finished writing, stood up and suddenly, to Lora's great surprise, clasped her round the waist and kissed her.

She took it for a good omen and, full of rosy hopes, went home.

On the way she said to Hans:

"I'll show you what!"

"You'll show it to someone else," rejoined the German quietly.

Next morning the sheriff came and stood before their shops. Both shop-keepers stood before their doors. Hans was puffing at a pipe. The young lady was singing:

"Dutchman, Dutchman, Du-Dutchman, Du-Dutchman-man!"

"Do you want to go to the judge?" asked the sheriff.

"We've been already."

"Well, and what happened?"

"My dear sheriff! My dear Mr. Devis!" cried the young lady. "Go and ask. I just require a pair of shoes. And say a word there for me to the judge. You see, I'm a poor girl . . . alone!"

The sheriff went and returned in a quarter of an hour. But, for no known reason, he came back surrounded by a crowd of people.

"Well, what? Well, how goes it?" they both started asking.

"Everything's all right—oh!" said the sheriff.

"Well, what did the judge do?"

"Why should he have done anything bad? He married you."

"Married us!"

"People do get married, don't they?"

If a thunderbolt had suddenly fallen Hans and Miss Neuman wouldn't have been so frightened. Hans opened his eyes wide, opened his mouth, hung out his tongue, and looked like a fool at Miss Neuman, while Miss Neuman opened her eyes wide, opened her mouth, hung out her tongue, and looked like a fool at Mr. Hans. They were struck dumb, turned to stone! Then they both started shouting:

"I'm supposed to be his wife?"

"I'm supposed to be her husband?"

"Help! Help! Never! A divorce at once! I won't!"

"No, I won't have it."

"I'll die first! Help! Divorce, divorce, divorce! What-ever's going on here!"

"My dear people," said the sheriff quietly; "what's the use of shouting? The judge marries but he doesn't divorce. What's the good of shouting? Are you San Francisco millionaires to get a divorce? Don't you know what it costs? *Al!* What're you shouting for? I've beautiful children's shoes. I sell them cheap. Good-bye!"

So saying he went off. The people, laughing, also dispersed. The newly-married couple remained alone.

"'Twas that Frenchman," cried the maiden-wife. "He did it on purpose because we're Germans."

"*Richtig!*" replied Hans.

"But we'll apply for a divorce."

"I'll do it first. You scratched me out a 't' from the middle."

"No, I'll be the first. You caught me in a trap."

"I don't want you."

"I can't bear you."

They separated and shut up their shops. She sat in her house meditating the whole day, and so did he. Night came. It brought no peace with it. Neither of them could think of sleep. They lay down, but no sleep came to their eyes. He thought: "There sleeps my wife!" She thought: "There sleeps my husband!" And strange feelings arose in their hearts. Those feelings were hatred and anger, together with a sense of

loneliness. Besides this, Mr. Hans thought of his monkey over the shop. How could he keep it there when it was a caricature of his wife? And it occurred to him that he had done a very horrid thing, having that monkey painted. But then, again, that Miss Neuman! Why, he hated her! It was her fault that his ice had melted. Why, he'd caught her by moonlight in a trap! Then again there came into his mind her form as seen by moonlight. "Well, truth to tell, she's a fine girl!" thought he. "But she can't bear me, nor I her." What a position! *Ach, Herr Gott!* He was married? And to whom? To Miss Neuman! And a divorce cost so much. His whole grocery wouldn't pay for it.

"I'm that Dutchman's wife," said Miss Neuman to herself. "I'm a spinster no longer . . . that is, I mean, I'm a spinster, but I've got married! To whom? To Kasche, who caught me in a trap! It's true, of course, that he took me round the waist and carried me up the stairs. How strong he is! He took me round the waist, just like that! . . . What's that? Something's rustling!"

There was no rustling, but Miss Neuman began to be afraid, though she'd never been afraid before.

"But if he dared now . . . Lord!" But then she added, in a voice in which there was a strange tone of disappointment:

"But he won't dare. He! . . ."

For all that her fear grew. "A woman's always so lonely!" she thought further. "If there were a man here it would be safer. I heard of robberies in the neighbourhood." (She hadn't.) "They'll kill me here some time or another. Ah, that Kasche! That Kasche! He's shut the way to me. I must take advice, anyhow, about a divorce."

So thinking, she tossed about sleeplessly in her wide American bed and really did feel very lonely. Suddenly she jumped up again. This time her fear had a real reason. Blows with a hammer were distinctly audible in the silence of the night.

"Lord!" cried the young lady. "They're breaking into my grocery!"

So saying, she jumped out of bed and ran to the window, but, looking through it, she at once calmed down. By the moonlight a ladder was visible and on it the rounded, white figure of Hans, beating out with the hammer the nails that kept the sign-board in place.

Miss Neuman noiselessly opened the window.

"Anyhow he's taking down the monkey. That's kind of him," she thought.

And suddenly she felt as if something round her heart melted.

Hans slowly drew out the nails. The sheet of tin fell with a clatter to the ground. Then he climbed down, hammered off the frame, rolled the sheet of tin in his veiny hands and began to remove the ladder.

The young lady followed him with her eyes. . . . The night was a quiet one, warm.

"Mr. Hans," the maiden suddenly whispered.

"Then you're not asleep, miss?" Hans whispered, just as softly.

"No. Good evening, sir!"

"Good evening, miss!"

"What are you doing?"

"Taking down the monkey."

"Thank you, Mr. Hans."

A moment's silence ensued.

"Mr. Hans!" murmured the maiden's voice again.

"What, Miss Lora?"

"We must talk over the divorce."

"Yes, Miss Lora."

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow."

A moment of silence, with the moon smiling, and no dogs barking.

"Mr. Hans!"

"What, Miss Lora?"

"I'm anxious to get that divorce."

The maiden's voice sounded mournfully.

"So 'm I, Miss Lora."

Hans's voice was sad.

"And you see, sir, so as not to delay . . ."

"Better not delay."

"The quicker we talk it over the better."

"The better, Miss Lora."

"Then we might talk it over at once."

"With your permission."

"Then you'll come to my place?"

"I'll just dress myself."

"No ceremony, please."

The hall door opened. Mr. Hans disappeared into the

darkness and, in a moment, found himself in the maiden's little room, which was quiet, warm and tidy. Miss Lora was clothed in a white dressing-gown and was charming.

"I'm listening," said Hans, in a soft, broken voice.

"Well, you see, sir, I should like very much to get a divorce, but . . . I'm afraid somebody in the street might have seen us."

"Why, the windows were dark," said Hans.

"Oh, yes, of course," rejoined Miss Lora.

Then began a council about divorce which has nothing to do with our story.

Peace returned to Struck-Oil City.

ACROSS THE PRAIRIES

CAPTAIN R.'S TALE

Translated by EVELINE BLACKETT

DURING my stay in California, I went one day in the company of my brave and honest friend, Captain R., to visit Mr. J., a countryman of ours, who lived in the lonely mountains of Santa Lucia. As we did not find him at home, we took up our abode for five days in the out-of-the-way canyon, together with an Indian servant, who, in the absence of his master, looked after the bees and the Angora goats. In accordance with the habits of the place, I spent the greater part of the stifling summer days sleeping, whilst at night, sitting down beside a fire made of dry *chaparral*, I listened to the tales of the captain concerning his extraordinary adventures which could have happened nowhere but in the American wastes.

The hours passed in the most delightful way. Those were Californian nights indeed, calm, warm, and starry. The fire crackled merrily, and in its light I saw the huge, fine, noble form of the old soldier-pioneer, who, raising his eyes to the stars, sought in his memory for events gone by, for dear names and dear faces of which the mere remembrance veiled his brow with mild melancholy. I give here one of these tales, just as it was told to me, trusting that the reader will listen to it with a curiosity equal to my own.

I

ON my arrival in America in the September of 1849—began the captain—I found myself at New Orleans, which at that time was still half French, and thence I went up the Mississippi to a big sugar-beet plantation where I obtained a post with good remuneration. But being then young and enterprising, I did not like the idea of sticking to one place, and doing stupid clerical work, so I soon abandoned it, and instead, took to the life of the bush. Thus I and my comrades passed a few years

in the Louisiana Lakes, amid crocodiles, snakes, and mosquitoes. We lived by hunting and fishing, and from time to time we floated big loads of timber down as far as Orleans, where we got a fair price for it. Our excursions often reached into the remotest parts; we penetrated into Bloody Arkansas, which, even to-day thinly populated, was then almost completely uninhabited. Such a life full of hardships and dangers, and bloody fights on the Mississippi with pirates and Indians who were quite numerous in the Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee regions, steeled my health and strength, which were by nature not particularly good, and provided me at the same time with a knowledge of the prairies, so that I read that great book no worse than any red warrior. Thanks to this experience, it happened, when, after the discovery of gold in California, large parties of emigrants were leaving Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other cities of the east almost daily, that I was called upon to become the leader of one of them, or, as we say, their "captain."

I agreed willingly, for at that time marvellous tales went round about California, and consequently I had long wanted to make for the far West. None the less I was well aware of all the dangers of such an enterprise. To-day it takes only a week to go from New York to San Francisco by rail, and the real desert begins only at Omaha. Then, things were quite different. All the big and little towns scattered nowadays in profusion between New York and Chicago did not then exist, and Chicago itself, which later grew up like a mushroom after rain, was then only a little insignificant unknown fishing settlement, which you could not have discovered on any map. Accordingly, you had to go, carts, men, and mules, across a regular wilderness populated by savage Indian tribes, the Ravens, the Blackfoots, the Pawnee, the Sioux, and the Arikara. It was impossible to hide from them if you were a large band, for these tribes, like shifting sands, wandered without a fixed home over the face of the prairies, hunting flocks of buffaloes and antelopes, so we had to count on very considerable hardships; but then once you go to the far West you should be prepared for them as well as for the fact that you may often have to risk your neck. But more than all that, I feared the responsibility that I had shouldered. Still, as the business was already settled I had no choice but to busy myself with the preparations for the road. They lasted for more than two months because I had to order wagons from

places as remote as Pittsburg in Pennsylvania, and to acquire mules, horses, and arms, and considerable food-stores. However at the end of the winter everything was ready.

I wanted to start at a time that would allow us to cross the great prairies between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains in the spring, for I knew that in the summer-time many people suffer from all sorts of diseases on account of the heat raging in these open spaces. For the same reason I decided to lead my men, not by the southern route by St. Louis, but through Iowa, Nebraska, and Northern Colorado. This route was more dangerous because of the Indians, but it was undoubtedly healthier. At first this plan aroused some resistance among the men belonging to the caravan, but when I told them that if they would not yield to my will they would have to look for another captain, they agreed after a little reflection, and at the first breath of spring we moved forward. From the outset difficult days set in for me, and they were especially difficult until the people grew accustomed to me and to the conditions of the journey. I managed to awaken their trust, for, owing to my adventurous expeditions in Arkansas, I enjoyed a certain reputation among the border men, and the name of "Big Ralph" by which I was known in the prairies had many times before rung in the ears of the greater part of my men. But, generally speaking, a "captain," by virtue of his leadership, has to handle many a delicate situation. It was my duty to choose the encampment for the night: to organize the column during the day: to keep an eye on the whole caravan, which sometimes stretched over a mile across the prairie: to appoint guards in the places where we stopped, and to discharge the men in detachments to go to rest in the wagons.

It is true that the Americans have the spirit of organization developed to a high degree, but as the hardships of the journey increase, human energy declines, discouragement comes down upon even the sturdiest, and in such moments nobody delights in riding a horse by day, or mounting guard by night; on the contrary, he would fain escape his turn in order to doze in the wagon all day long. Moreover, when dealing with Yankees, a captain must know how to reconcile discipline with easy comradeship, which is not a simple matter. Thus it happened that during the march and the nightly rests I was absolute leader of my men, but during the rests by day in the farms and settlements which we found in profusion at the beginning of our travels, my

role of commander ceased. Then everybody was his own master, and I often had to fight with the audacious adventurers. But after I had proved within many a "ring" that my Masovian fist was stronger than any American one, I took on a new importance in their eyes, and I had no personal grievances any more. Moreover, I understood thoroughly the character of the Americans, and how to manage them, particularly as a certain pair of blue eyes, looking at me with keen interest from under the canvas roof of a wagon, encouraged me to persevere. Those eyes, gazing from under a brow shaded by luxuriant golden hair, belonged to a young girl of the name of Lilian Morris, from Boston, Massachusetts. She was a graceful, delicate creature, with a wistful expression on her small features almost like those of a child.

I was struck at the very beginning of our journey by this sadness in such a young creature, but soon my duties as captain turned my thoughts and attention elsewhere. For the first few weeks, except for the customary daily "Good morning," we hardly exchanged a single word. However, as I felt compassion for Lilian's youth and loneliness, for she had no relatives whatsoever in the caravan, I rendered her a few small services. There was no need to protect her with a leader's authority and fist against the attentions of the young men of the camp, for, among the Americans, a young woman may be sure, if not of the extreme politeness characteristic of the French, at least of complete safety. On account of Lilian's delicate health I placed her in the most comfortable wagon, driven by the most experienced driver, Smith. With my own hands I made her bed so that she could sleep at night in comfort. Finally, I placed at her disposal a warm buffalo skin, one of those I had in store. Unimportant though these services were, Lilian seemed to feel a lively gratitude, and did not neglect any opportunity of displaying it to me. She seemed an extremely shy creature. The two women, Aunt Grosvenor and Aunt Atkins, soon fell in love with her, because of the sweetness of her disposition, and the nickname of "Little Bird" given her by them soon became that by which she was known throughout the camp. However, there was no further approach between the Little Bird and myself, until I noticed that the girl's almost angelic blue eyes followed me with special friendliness and obstinate interest.

I could have accounted for this by the fact that I alone of the whole band had social polish, and consequently she, in whom a

more careful upbringing was evident, must have seen in me one who was nearer her than the others around her. At that time, however, I accounted for it in a somewhat different way; and the interest she took in me tickled my vanity, and made me pay more heed to Lilian, and look more often into her eyes. In a short time I could not imagine exactly how it had happened that I had not paid attention before to such an exquisite creature, capable of inspiring tender sentiments in any man that possessed a heart; and from that moment I liked hovering round her wagon on horseback. During the daily heat, which, in spite of the fact that it was early spring, affected us terribly at midday, when the mules dragged lazily along, and the caravan stretched so far over the prairie that if you stood near the first wagon you could hardly distinguish the last, I would gallop from end to end, riding down the horses with no other purpose than that of catching a passing glimpse of that bright little head and those eyes that never left my thoughts. At first it was my imagination rather than my heart that was stirred, but the idea that among all these strangers I was not completely alone, but that there was a little sympathetic soul who took an interest in me, acted as an agreeable encouragement. Its source was not in my vanity, but in the necessity which man feels on this earth not to squander his thoughts and feelings upon such indefinite and general things as forests and prairies, but to concentrate them upon one dear live being; instead of losing himself in distances and infinities, to find himself in the heart of one beloved. I felt I was less lonely, and the whole journey took on new charms hitherto unknown. Before, when the caravan stretched over the prairie so that the last teams disappeared from view, I saw only a lack of caution and disorder that made me very angry. Now, whenever I had ed on a hill, the sight of the white and striped wagons bright in the sunlight and diving like ships in a sea of grass, of the armed horsemen scattered in picturesque confusion along the teams, filled my soul with enthusiasm and bliss; and I cannot tell whence these comparisons dawned upon my mind, but it seemed to me that it was some biblical caravan which I was leading like a patriarch of old into the Promised Land. The bells of the mules' harness and the melodious "Get up" of the drivers accompanied my thoughts like music evoked by love and nature. However, since that first conversation of our eyes we scarcely passed on to any other conversation, because I was embarrassed by the presence of her

female companions. Moreover, since perceiving that some bond of sympathy existed between us, something that I could not define though I felt it existed, a curious sort of shyness came over me. However, I redoubled my attentions towards the women, and often looked into the wagon to inquire after the health of Aunt Atkins and Aunt Grosvenor, to justify and counterbalance the care I devoted to Lilian. But she understood my policy full well, and this understanding formed a sort of secret, hidden from the rest of our companions. Soon, however, glances, a passing exchange of words and civil attentions, did not satisfy me any more. This girl with bright hair and sweet glances attracted me with an irresistible force. I began to think of her for whole days, and even at night; when, worn out after inspecting the guards, and hoarse with shouting "All's right." I climbed into my wagon, and, wrapping myself up in a buffalo skin, closed my eyes to get a sleep, it seemed to me that the gnats and mosquitoes whirring about me were singing incessantly into my ear the name of Lilian, Lilian, Lilian. Her form stood near me in my dreams; awaking, my first thought flew to her like a swallow; yet, curiously enough, I did not perceive at once that the lovely charm which everything took on for me, this spiritual painting of things in golden colours, the fancies floating after her wagon, were not of friendship or sympathy for an orphan, but a feeling far stronger from which nobody can defend himself when his turn has come.

I might have noticed this sooner had not the sweetness of Lilian's character won over all and each. I thought, therefore, that I was falling under the girl's spell just like the rest. Everybody loved her like an only child, and my eyes had proofs of this every day. Her companions were simple souls with an inclination for quarrelling, but many a time I saw Aunt Atkins, who was a regular virago, combing Lilian's hair and kissing it with maternal affection in the morning, while Mrs. Grosvenor warmed the girl's hands, cold after the night, in her own. The men also surrounded her with attentions and little services. There was in the caravan one Henry Simpson, a young Kansas adventurer, an intrepid gunsman and a good fellow at bottom. But he was so self-confident and rude and arrogant that, in the very first month of our expedition, I was compelled to thrash him twice in order to convince him that there was somebody stronger of fist and more important than he in the camp. You should have seen this same Henry talking to Lilian, he who

would not have heeded the President of the Union himself. In her presence he lost his self-assurance and audacity, and repeatedly doffing his hat, he would say again and again, "I beg your pardon, Miss Morris," and look like a big chained dog, but you could have seen that the dog was ready to obey every motion of the tiny, childish hand. Whenever we halted he always tried to be near Lilian to be able to render her various little services; he would make the fire for her, and choose out a spot protected from the smoke, lining it with moss and his own blankets, and then he would select the best bits of game for her, doing everything with a shy care that I hardly expected of him, and which aroused in my breast a certain animosity closely resembling jealousy.

Still I could do nothing but be angry. Henry, except for his turn at camp duty, was free to dispose of his time as he liked, and that was to keep near Lilian. On the other hand my turn never ended. During the trek the wagons moved forward, one after the other, often at long intervals, but when we had entered the desert regions, I was wont to place them for the midday rest according to the custom of the prairies; that is in single file, and packed so close together that one could scarcely pass between their wheels. You can hardly imagine how difficult it was to form such a column that could be easily defended. The mules, which by nature were savage, stubborn beasts, would refuse to budge or remove themselves from the track, and would bite each other, and whinny and kick. The wagons, diverted from the track by the sudden movement, were often overturned, and it took a considerable time to raise these regular houses of wood and canvas. The neighing of the mules, the oaths of the drivers, the tinkling of the bells, and the barking of the dogs that dragged behind us, caused an infernal din. When I had managed somehow or other to restore some kind of order, I had in addition to see that the beasts were unharnessed, and that the muleteers drove them first to pasture, and then to the river. Meanwhile, the men, who, during the march went off to hunt in the prairies, would come back from all directions, carrying the game: they would place themselves round the fire, whereas I had hardly time enough to breathe and eat.

When, after some repose, we moved on, my task was almost doubled, for the harnessing of the mules caused more bickering and noise than the unharnessing. Then the drivers would try

to get in front of each other so as to avoid leaving the track when the road was bad, as was often the case. This evoked arguments and quarrels and curses, and unpleasant delays in our journey. I had to look after all this, and during the trek to ride in front close on the heels of the guides, to survey the country and choose out in advance the spots that were well protected, well watered, and generally suitable for camping. Many a time I cursed my duties as captain, though, on the other hand, I felt proud at the idea that in the sight of the endless desert I was first, first in the sight of all my men, and first in the sight of Lilian—proud that the fates of all these beings wandering over the prairies in their wagons were in my hands.

II

ONE day after crossing the Mississippi we pitched camp by the River Cedar, whose banks, covered with cotton groves, provided us with fuel for the whole night. When returning from the muleteers, sent to cut wood, I noticed, while still far off, our people scattered in all directions from the camp over the prairie, doubtless enjoying the fine weather and the quiet of the warm day. It was quite early, for we used to stop at five o'clock, to move on next day at the streak of dawn. Soon I met Miss Morris. I dismounted at once, and, leading the horse by the reins, I approached her, happy that I might be alone with her even though it were only for a moment. I began to inquire of her why, young and solitary as she was, she had decided to undertake a journey that might tax the strength of even the strongest man.

"I should never have agreed to accept you into our caravan," I said; "but during the first days I thought you were the daughter of Aunt Atkins, and it is now too late to change my mind. Still, will you have strength enough, my dear child? For you ought to know that as the journey goes on we shall come across more and more difficulties."

"Yes, sir," she replied, raising her blue eyes to my face. "I am well aware of all this, but I must go, and I am quite glad that it is impossible to go back. My father is in California, and I learned from a letter which he sent me from Cape Horn that for several months he has been suffering from fever at Sacramento. Poor Dad! He was used to every comfort

and my care, and it was only for my sake that he went to California. I don't know whether I shall find him alive, but I feel that in going to him I only fulfil a sweet duty."

There was nothing to be said to this; besides, anything I might have said against this enterprise would have come too late. Instead, I asked Lilian for details concerning her father which she eagerly gave me, and from which I learned that Mr. Morris was Judge of the Supreme Court at Boston, that is to say of the highest state tribunal in Boston. He had lost his fortune, and so had made for the recently discovered Californian mines where he hoped to build up again his lost wealth, and to re-establish the former social position of his daughter, whom he loved more than life itself. But in the meantime, he had instead caught fever in the unhealthy valley of Sacramento, and as he felt that he was going to die he had sent his last blessings to Lilian. She had at once got together all he had left her and made the decision to follow him. At first her plan was to go by water, but she had chanced to meet Aunt Atkins two days before the caravan started, and so had changed her mind. Aunt Atkins, who was from Tennessee, and whose ears were full of the tales which my friends of the banks of the Mississippi told of my daring excursions into the notorious Arkansas, and my experiences while journeying across the deserts, and of the protection which I had given the weak (and which I considered to be little more than my duty), had painted me in such colours in Lilian's eyes that the girl joined the caravan led by me without the slightest hesitation. These wild stories of Aunt Atkins, who had not failed to add that I was of noble birth, accounted for the interest which Miss Morris took in my person.

"My dear little creature," I said, when she had finished her story, "I am sure that nobody here would ever dream of doing you any harm, and that you will never go unprotected. As to your father, California is the healthiest country in the world, and nobody dies there of fever. At any rate, as long as I'm alive you won't be alone, and meantime, God bless your sweet face."

"Thank you, Captain," she replied in moved tones, and we walked on, but my heart beat more and more loudly.

Gradually our talk grew merrier; we did not foresee that in a short space the serene sky overhead would become clouded.

"Everybody here is friendly to you, Miss Morris isn't it so?"

I asked her, never guessing for a moment that this very question would be the cause of a misunderstanding.

"Oh, yes," she replied; "everybody. Aunt Atkins, Aunt Grosvenor and Henry Simpson. He also is very kind."

This allusion to Henry Simpson suddenly pierced me like a snake-bite.

"Henry is a mule-driver," I replied dryly, "and his business is to look after the wagons."

But Lilian, pursuing the course of her own thoughts, did not notice the change in my tone, and continued as if talking to herself:

"He has a good heart, and I shall be grateful to him all my life."

"Miss Morris," I interrupted, hurt to the quick, "you can even give him your hand, but I wonder why you have chosen to confide your sentiments to me."

When I said this she looked at me in astonishment, but she did not say anything, and we walked on in awkward silence. I did not know what to say to her, and my heart was filled with bitter anger, both against her and against myself. I felt humiliated by this jealousy of mine, in connection with Simpson. Yet I could not help it, and the situation seemed to me so intolerable that I uttered, in a short, dry way, an abrupt "Good night, Miss Morris."

"Good night," she replied in a low voice, turning away to conceal two tears rolling down her cheeks.

I remounted my horse and made off again in the direction from which came the noise of axes, and where Henry Simpson among others was busy cutting down wood. But after a moment, I was overcome by an immense sadness, because it seemed to me as if those two tears had fallen upon my very heart. I turned the horse's head back, and in an instant I was with her again. Jumping down from the saddle, I barred her way.

"Why are you crying, Lilian?" I asked.

"Oh, sir," she said, "I know you come of a noble family, for Aunt Atkins told me so, but you've been so kind to me . . ."

She made an effort not to cry, but she could not stop herself or finish her sentence, for tears choked her voice.

My reply had hurt the poor little creature to the very depths of her sad soul, for she saw in it a sort of aristocratic disdain, though I had never given a thought to any aristocracy, and was

simply jealous. Now, seeing her grief, I wanted to give myself a kick. I caught her by the hand, and began to speak quickly.

"Lilian, Lilian, you have misunderstood me. I swear by Heaven that it was not pride that spoke in me. Look here. Except for these hands of mine, I haven't anything in the world, so what do I care about my pedigree? It was something else that hurt me, and I wanted to go away, but I can't stand your tears, and furthermore, I swear to you that my words hurt me much more than they do you. I am not indifferent to you, Lilian. Please don't think that, because if it were so I should not care at all about what you think of Henry. He's a good fellow, but that's of no account. You see what your tears are to me, so pardon me as sincerely as I ask for forgiveness."

With these words, I raised her hand and pressed it to my lips, and this unusual token of reverence and the note of truth in my entreaty succeeded in calming the girl to some extent. She did not cease crying, but now her tears were different, for you could have seen a smile through them like a ray of light through a mist. A lump rose in my own throat, too, nor could I help my emotion. A feeling of tenderness overwhelmed me. We walked on again in silence, but we were happy walking thus together. Meanwhile, the day slipped towards evening. The weather was splendid, and in the sky, declining softly towards darkness, there was so much light that everything, the prairie, and the distant clumps of cotton trees, and the wagons of the caravan, and the lines of wild geese flying northward over the sky, seemed all pink and golden. Not the slightest breeze stirred the grass. From afar off came the sound of the waterfalls which the River Cedar forms in this place, and the neighing of the horses from the camp. This evening that was so charming, this virgin land, and the presence of Lilian, all created such an atmosphere that my soul sought almost to abandon me, and soar into the heavens. It seemed to me that I was as a swinging bell. At moments I wanted to take Lilian's hand and raise it to my lips and keep it there for very long, but I feared that this would offend her. She, meantime, walked at my side, calm, gentle, and lost in thought, her tears all dried. Sometimes she raised her eyes full of light to mine, and then we walked on again, and so we came to the camp at last.

This day in which I had known so many emotions was to end in merry wise, however, for our people, pleased with the fine

weather, resolved to have a picnic. After supper, which was more copious than usual, a big fire was kindled, round which they intended to dance. Henry Simpson cut down the grass for several square yards around, and, after he had stamped it down, he covered it with the sand which he had brought from the river. When the spectators gathered round, to their astonishment he began to dance a jig on the spot he had prepared, to the accompaniment of a negro pipe. With arms dangling loosely at his sides and body held stiffly, he moved his feet so quickly, striking the ground alternately with heel and toe, that your eyes could hardly keep up with the movements. Meanwhile, the pipes rang out wildly. The second, the third, and the fourth dancers advanced, and the merry-making became general. The onlookers joined in with the negro pipers, jingling the tin bowls that were used for washing gold dust or cracking bones together between their fingers to keep time, making a noise as of tambourines. Suddenly, shouts of "Minstrels! Minstrels!" were heard throughout the camp. The onlookers made a ring in the centre of which our negroes, Jim and Crow, appeared, the first with a drum made of a snake skin, the other with knuckle-bones. For a while they stared at each other, showing the whites of their eyes. Then they started to sing a negro melody, interrupted by stamping and violent contortions, a melody now wild, now sad. A prolonged "Dinah-ah-ah!" at the end of each verse turned ultimately into a howl like the cry of beasts. The greater the excitement and enthusiasm of the dancers became, the more agitated grew their movements, and finally they began to bang each other's heads with a violence that would have shattered any European skull like a nutshell. The black forms lit up by the glaring brightness of the fire and hopping madly up and down made indeed a fantastic picture. With the sound of their shrieks, and the drums, and the pipes, and the tin bowls, and the knuckle-bones, mingled the shouts of the onlookers: "Hurrah for Jim! Hurrah for Crow!" and even pistol shots rang out. At length the blacks were exhausted, and falling down upon the ground, began to pant. I had a draught of brandy given them, after which they recovered at once. Then some of the people started clamouring for me to make a speech. The din and the sounds of the music ceased at once. There was nothing for it but to drop Lilian's arm and climb upon the top of the wagon and address those assembled. When my eyes wandered over all

these figures lit up by the flames of the fire, all thick-set, bearded men, with knives tucked into their belts, and brimless hats on their heads, it seemed to me that I was present at some strange spectacle, that I had turned into a bandits' chieftain. But those were brave and honest hearts, although many of these men led a hard, half-savage and tempestuous life. However, here we formed a little world separate from the rest of the community, self-sufficient, destined to face a common fate, threatened with common dangers. Here one man's arm had to support another's, every one felt he was a brother, and the endless wilderness and desert that surrounded us made the hardened miners love each other. The sight of Lilian, that poor defenceless girl, as safe and sound as if she were under her parents' roof, put these ideas into my head, so I expressed them just as they came to me as befitted the leader of the band and a fellow-wanderer. Again and again they interrupted me with applause and shouts of: "Hurrah for the Pole! Hurrah for the Captain! Hurrah for Big Ralph!" But I was happiest when I saw a pair of tiny hands, rosy in the firelight, flutter like a pair of doves amid a hundred strong, weather-beaten palms. I suddenly realized that I did not mind the desert or the wild beasts, or the Indians or the outlaws, and I shouted enthusiastically that I would manage everything, that I would overcome everything that crossed my path, and would lead the caravan even unto the end of the world, and might God damn my right hand if I did not speak the truth! A "Hurrah!" even louder than before answered these words of mine, and all present began to sing with great enthusiasm the emigrants' song: "I crossed Mississippi; I shall cross Missouri." Then Smith, the oldest of the emigrants, a miner from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, expressed a vote of thanks on behalf of the whole caravan, praising my skilful leadership, and after Smith, from almost every wagon somebody made a speech. Some were quite amusing, particularly that of Henry Simpson, who shouted every moment: "Gentlemen, may I be hanged if I do not speak the truth!" Then when the speakers were hoarse, the pipes and knuckle-bones began to sound again, and they took to a jig. Meanwhile darkness fell, the moon rose in the sky, and shone so brightly that the fires looked pale by its side, and the human forms and the wagons were bathed in a red and white twofold light. It was a glorious night. The noises of the camp stood out in sharp but lovely contrast to the peace and calm

of the prairie. I took Lilian by the hand and walked with her right round the camp, and our gaze, quitting the fires, travelled into the distance to be lost in a wave of prairie plants which, in the silver moonshine, seemed some mysterious sprites. Thus we wandered, and, meantime, by one of the fires two Scotch Highlanders began to play on their bagpipes the melancholy strains of "Bonny Dundee." We stopped not far off and listened for a moment in silence. Suddenly my eyes rested on her face. She cast down her eyes, and I don't know why, but I pressed lightly to my breast her hand that rested on my arm, and kept it there for a long time. Her poor little heart began to beat so strongly that it was as though I had it in my palm. We were both trembling, for we felt that something was happening to us, a mysterious crisis that would bear us away from our former relations. I was being carried along whither this wave bore me: I was conscious of nothing, neither the bright night, nor the fires near by, nor the groups about them; nothing save this, that I desired more than anything else to fall at her feet, at least to look into her eyes. But though she leaned her head against my shoulder, she turned it aside as if wanting to hide in the shadows. I tried to say something, but I could not, for it seemed to me that I should speak in a strange voice, or that if I said the words, "I love you," I should die. I was shy, being young, and led not by my senses alone but by my very soul, and I felt that once I had said, "I love you," all my past life would be cut off from me as by a curtain, that it would be like a door closing and another opening, through which I should pass into a new land. Thus though I saw happiness beyond that threshold, I lingered, it may be because I was blinded by the glory that I saw beyond. Love that comes from the heart and not from the lips cannot be easily expressed. I ventured to press Lilian's hand to my breast, and we were both silent, for I did not dare to speak of love, and I could not speak of anything else in that supreme moment.

At length we turned our eyes to heaven to gaze at the stars as those who pray. Suddenly, somebody from the big fire called my name. We turned back. The merrymaking was drawing to its close, and, in order to end it with suitable dignity, the emigrants decided to sing psalms before going to rest. The men bowed their heads, and though we were of many different creeds we knelt down, every one of us, on the prairie grass, and began to sing the psalm: "They wandered in the wilderness."

It was a stirring sight; in the intervals there was such a consummate calm that one could hear the sparks of the crackling fires and the murmur of the falls of the river. As I knelt at Lilian's side, I looked at her once or twice. Her eyes raised to heaven shone with a wondrous light: her hair was a little ruffled, and, as she sang devoutly, she looked so like an angel that one wanted to pray to her.

When prayers were over, the men went to their wagons. I inspected the guards according to my usual custom, and then I, too, went to rest. But when the little night-flies began to hum in my ears as they did every day, "Lilian, Lilian, Lilian," I knew that there in the wagon slept the light of my eyes, the soul of my soul, and that there was nobody in the world as dear to me as that one being.

III

NEXT day at dawn we crossed the Cedar without mishap, and came into a vast flat prairie, which, stretching between this river and Winnebago, imperceptibly turned southward to meet a belt of forest-land, covering the southern part of Iowa. That morning Lilian did not venture to look into my eyes. I saw that she was thoughtful; she seemed to be ashamed or troubled by something: yet we had committed no crime the day before. She scarcely left her wagon. Aunt Atkins and Aunt Grosvenor, who thought she was feeling unwell, showered caresses and tenderness upon her. I alone knew what was troubling her, that it was neither weakness nor remorse of conscience, but the struggle of an innocent being against a foreboding of some strange and unknown force that was about to snatch her and carry her away like a fallen leaf. 't was a premonition of destiny, of her weakness before it, and her surrender to that power. She would forget everything and only love.

A pure soul lingers aghast on the threshold of love; but with the realization that it must be crossed it grows weak. Thus Lilian was as if overcome by sleep; and when I understood everything my joy almost choked the breath in my breast. I wondered if this was an honourable feeling; but when I passed by her wagon in the morning and saw her broken like a flower, I felt as a bird of prey must feel when it sees that the dove cannot escape its clutch. And yet I did not wish to do any

harm to this dove; nay, not for all the treasures of the world, for my heart was filled with a boundless compassion. But, strange thing! in spite of these sweet thoughts of Lilian, the whole day passed as if in mutual offence, or at least in great embarrassment. I did all in my power to discover how to remain alone with Lilian, even though only for a moment, but in vain. Fortunately, Aunt Atkins came to the rescue by telling me that the little girl needed more exercise, and that sitting in the stuffy wagon was not good for her. It occurred to me that she might ride on horseback, and I ordered Simpson to saddle a horse for her. There were no side-saddles in our caravan, but one of those Mexican saddles with a raised pommel such as are generally used by women stood us in good stead. I forbade Lilian to go out of sight of the caravan. Of course, it would have been rather difficult to lose one's way in the flat prairie, for the men I had sent to hunt were to be found in all directions outside the camp, so that there was always the likelihood of meeting somebody or other. As for the Indians, no danger was to be expected from them, for this part of the prairie, as far as Winnebago, was visited by the Pawnees only at the time of the big hunts, and these were not to take place yet. Still, as the southern track of the forests was not occupied by grass-eating animals alone, caution was not superfluous. To tell the truth, I expected that Lilian would keep to my side for safety's sake, a circumstance that would have allowed us to remain alone, especially since I used to move ahead of the caravan, preceded only by the two half-caste guides, and followed by the whole camp. And so it happened; on the very first day I was inexpressibly happy when I saw my gentle Amazon coming from the caravan at a light gallop. The horse's movement unbound her hair, and a struggle with her frock, which was a little too short for riding purposes, filled her cheeks with charming confusion. When she drew near she looked like a rose, for she knew that she was entering a trap set by me to be alone with her. She knew it, but she came on, though flushed at the thought, as if she were an unwilling victim and unconscious of her fate. My heart pounded like a schoolboy's, and when our horses came side by side I was angry with myself because I did not know what to say. And at once such strong, sweet desires drew us together that, compelled by an irresistible force, I bent towards her as if to adjust something on her horse's mane, and in doing so I leaned against the pommel of her saddle,

and pressed my lips to her hand. A strange unspeakable happiness, greater and stronger than any joy I had ever known, flooded every fibre of my being. Then I pressed her little hand to my heart, and began to tell Lilian that if the Lord had bestowed on me all the realms of the whole world, and all the treasures of the earth, I would not exchange them for a single lock of her hair, for she had taken possession of me, body and soul, for ever.

"Lilian, Lilian," I went on, "I shall never leave you, I shall follow you across mountains and deserts, I shall kiss your feet, I shall pray to you, if only you will love me a little, if only you will tell me that I have a place in your heart."

I thought that my breast would burst when I said this, and when she in utmost confusion began to repeat, "Ralph, you know very well, you know everything!" I did not know whether to laugh or cry, whether to run away or stay, and as I aspire to-day after heaven, so then I was in heaven itself, because I did not want anything more in the world.

Thenceforth, whenever my duties as captain permitted, I was with her; and these duties dwindled daily until we reached the Missouri. Perhaps there was no other caravan as successful as ours during the first months of our journey. Both men and beasts got used to discipline, and became good travellers, so that there was no need for me to look so much after them. The trust they placed in me kept up an excellent spirit in the camp. Plenty of food and the fine spring weather created a spirit of joy, and strengthened our health. Day by day I grew more and more convinced that my daring scheme of leading the caravan, not by the usual route via St. Louis and Kansas, but through Iowa and Nebraska, was an excellent one. There the unbearable heat was very pernicious, and between the Mississippi and the Missouri fevers and other diseases thinned the ranks of travellers, whilst here diseases diminished because of the cooler climate, and hardships were less numerous.

Although the route via St. Louis was in its first stages comparatively safe from the Indians, my caravan, consisting of two hundred and thirty people, well-armed and ready to fight, had no need to fear them, for the tribes that lived in Iowa knew, from coming up against them many a time, what the arms of the white people were like, and did not dare to attack large bands. We had only one thing to guard against, and that was stampedes; that is to say, attacks by night on the mules and

horses, for the theft of beasts of burden in a desert leaves a caravan in a desperate plight. But this was the business of the guards who, like myself, were well aware of the tricks of the Indians. Thus, once I had established the order of the march and my people had got used to it, I had incomparably less work to do in a day than at the beginning of our journey, and could devote more time to the sentiments that possessed my heart. At night I went to sleep with the thought that next day I should see Lilian. In the morning I would say to myself, "To-day I shall see Lilian," and day by day I grew happier and more in love with her. The people in the caravan gradually began to notice all this, but they made no objection, for both Lilian and I had won their liking. Once old Smith, coming upon us, exclaimed, "God bless you, captain, and you, Lilian!" and this juxtaposition of our names made us happy the whole day. Aunt Grosvenor and Aunt Atkins would whisper something into Lilian's ear that would make her blush like the morning star, but she would never tell me what it was. Henry Simpson alone watched us gloomily. He might have been plotting something in his heart, but I did not mind.

At four in the morning every day I was accustomed to find myself at the head of the caravan. The guides, preceding me at a distance of about a thousand paces, were wont to sing the songs they had learned from their Indian mothers. Behind me, at nearly the same distance, wound the caravan, like a white ribbon across the prairie. You can imagine what a splendid moment in the day followed when, towards six o'clock, I would hear all of a sudden the clatter of horses' hoofs behind me, and I would look; and the light of my soul approaches, my beloved girl! The morning breeze sends her hair streaming behind her and ruffles it, though it was purposely not bound tightly, for the naughty little fairy knew very well that this suited her, that I liked it, and that if the wind cast her tresses against me, I should kiss them. I pretended I was not aware of it, and in such sweet expectation the morning began. I taught her the Polish expression *Dzień dobry* (Good morning), and whenever I heard her pronounce these words, they sounded so sweet in my ear that she seemed to grow even dearer to me; and memories of my country and my family and years gone by flew across the desert like gulls across the ocean; and many a time I would fain have wept, but, ashamed, restrained the tears ready to well up in my eyes. She knew that though I did not cry, my heart

was very full, and she would repeat like a linnet, "*Dzień dobry! Dzień dobry! Dzień dobry!*" so that how could I help loving this little linnet of mine? Then I began to teach her other words, and when her little English lips struggled with our difficult sounds, and I laughed at her mispronunciation, she would pout like a child and pretend to be angry and displeased with me. But we were never angry with each other, and only once a little cloud passed between us. One morning, I pretended that I wanted to tighten a buckle at her stirrup, and the wild ex-lancer in me awoke, and I began to kiss her little foot, or rather the poor shoe worn out in the desert that I would not have exchanged for a kingdom. She, pressing her little foot against the horse, and saying, "Don't, Ralph, please don't," turned away; and though I apologized and tried to soothe her, she would not come near me. But she did not go back to the caravan for fear of hurting me. As for me, I pretended to be much more contrite than I really was, and, plunged in silence, I rode alone as if everything in the world had come to an end for me. I knew that pity would rise up within her, and I was right, for soon, made uneasy by my silence, she crept up to me, and looked into my eyes as a child that wants to find out whether its mother is still angry, and I, though I tried to look angry, had to turn away my face to help laughing. But this only happened once; usually we were as gay as prairie squirrels, and sometimes, God forgive me! I, the captain of the whole caravan, became as a child at her side. Sometimes, as we rode together, I would turn suddenly towards her, saying that I had something new and very important to tell her; and when she listened attentively I would whisper to her, "I love you." Then she, too, would whisper in my ear, smiling and blushing, "And I, too"; and so we confided our secrets to one another in the desert, where only the wind might have overheard.

In this way the days passed quickly, and it seemed to me that the mornings were bound to the evenings like links of a chain. Now and then some incident or other came to break the pleasant monotony of our journey. One Sunday, the half-breed, Wichita, lassoed a big antelope of the kind which the prairie people call "Dick," along with her young one. I presented it to Lilian, and she made a collar for it with a bell taken from a mule. We called the kid "Katty." By the end of a week it had grown tame and ate out of our hands. Thus it happened that during the trek I rode on one side of Lilian, whereas on

the other ran Katty, with big black eyes uplifted, and, by her bleating, pleading to be caressed.

After Winnebago, we embarked upon a plain, flat as a table, vast, luxuriant, virgin. Our guides disappeared from view among the grass and thistles, and our horses paddled in it as in a sea. I showed Lilian this world so completely new to her, and she was enchanted with its beauties, and I was proud that she liked this realm of mine so much. It was spring, towards the end of April, that is, the season of the most luxuriant growth of grass and herbs of every kind. Everything that may blossom in a desert did so there.

At night an intoxicating scent came from the prairie as of a thousand censers. In the day-time when the wind blew and rocked the glowing meadow, it hurt the eyes to behold its red and blue and yellow, and all its other hues. The stalks of some yellow flowers recalling our Solomon's Rod rose from a dense undergrowth, and the silver threads of a little plant called "tears" wound about it. Its cups, transparent globes, reminded me, indeed, of tears. My eyes, accustomed to read in the book of the prairie, again and again discovered the herbs I knew so well: the big leaves of the calumba, good for wounds, the red and white mimosa, which close their eyes when approached by man or beast; and, finally, the "Indian axes," whose perfume makes you so drowsy as almost to deprive you of consciousness. I taught Lilian to read in this book of God, saying, "You have to live among the forests and prairies, dear, so you must acquaint yourself with them as quickly as possible."

In certain spots of the flat prairie, there rose up, like oases, groves of cotton plants and fir trees, so overgrown with the wild vine and liana, that they were hardly visible beneath the luxuriant foliage. The lianas, in their turn, were overgrown with ivy, and the prickly twining brier that resembles our wild roses. The flowers drooped as if flowing over the sides, whilst in the midst behind this curtain and behind this wall there hid a mysterious dusk. At the foot of the tree-trunks big pools of spring-water which the sun could not drink up dreamed there in the darkness, and from the tree-tops, and from among the wealth of flowers, came strange voices, and the call of the birds. When I showed these trees and the cascades of flowers to Lilian for the first time, she stopped, spell-bound, clasped her hands together, and cried, "Oh Ralph, is it true?"

She said that she feared to go into their depths. One after-

noon, however, when the heat was at its height, and the warm breath of the Texas breeze passed over the plains, we both made off in that direction along with Katty.

We halted by a pool which reflected our forms and those of our horses. We stood for a moment in silence. It was cool, dim and solemn and awe-inspiring, as in a Gothic church. The light of day came filtering through, green and dark with the foliage. A bird concealed by the cupola of the lianas shrieked, "No, no, no," as if warning us not to penetrate farther. Katty trembled and shrank against the horses. Lilian and I gazed on each other, and our lips met for the first time, and did not want to part. She drank from my soul, and I from hers, and, though we could hardly breathe, our lips yet remained together. Her eyes grew filmy, and her hands on my shoulders shivered as in a fever, and she forgot her own existence, and grew weak, and rested her head against my breast. We were drunk with each other's presence, with rapture and happiness. I could not move, my heart was full, I loved her a hundred times more than thought or words might express; and could only raise my eyes and seek the sky through the foliage.

When we awoke from our ecstasy, we turned aside from the dense greenness into the open space, and there a bright light and a warm breeze encircled us, and the gay broad expanse again came upon our sight, and the prairie hens sped past in the grass.

On rising mounds, perforated like sieves with the holes of the prairie squirrels, were droves of these animals that disappeared underground at our approach. Straight ahead we saw the caravan and the men riding about the wagons on horseback.

It seemed to me that we came from a darkened chamber into broad daylight, and so it appeared also to Lilian. The brightness of the day made my heart glad, but the streams of golden light and the memory of our kisses, the traces of which were still visible on her little face, filled her with fear and sadness.

"Ralph, you don't think badly of me, do you?" she asked me suddenly.

"What ever made you think that, dear? May the Lord forget me if I have anything but love and reverence for you in my heart."

"It happened only because I love you so much," she said, and at once her lips trembled and she cried softly; and though I did my best to calm her, she was sad all that day.

IV

At length we reached the Missouri. The Indians were wont to attack the caravans when they crossed the river, for it was very difficult to put up a defence when one section of the wagons was on one bank and the other on the opposite side; when the pack-horses would kick and rear, and the party would break up in confusion. As a matter of fact, I noticed that during the two days that preceded our arrival at the river we were indeed followed by Indian scouts; and so I took all kinds of precautions and led the caravan in a regular warlike manner. I would not permit the wagons to straggle across the prairie as they had done on the eastern borders of Iowa; my men had to close in, in readiness for a skirmish. On reaching the bank and the ford, I ordered two detachments of sixty men each to build an earth-wall on each side of the river, to secure the crossing under cover of this small rampart and the barrels of our rifles. The remaining hundred and ten emigrants had to transport the wagons. I did not allow more than a few wagons to set off together, so that there might be no confusion. In this way there was complete order, and attack was impossible, for the attacking party would have had to storm one or other of the ramparts to reach those who were making the river crossing. The future was to prove that these precautions were not altogether superfluous, for, two years later, four hundred Germans were cut down as they crossed the river by the Kiawatha tribe, on the very spot on which the town of Omaha now stands. I had also one other advantage: when my men, who were acquainted with many of the tales that spread over the east concerning the terrible dangers accompanying the crossing of the yellow waters of the Missouri, saw the ease and certitude with which I performed my task, they began to trust me blindly, and consider me the ruling spirit of the deserts.

Each day enthusiastic praises reached Lilian, and made a legendary hero of me in her eyes; and when Aunt Atkins said to her, "As long as your Pole is with you, you may even sleep in the rain if you like, for he won't allow you to get wet!" the heart of my beloved swelled with pride. However, during the crossing I could hardly devote a single moment to her, and only on rare occasions could I tell her with my eyes those things that my lips might not say. For whole days, I was on horseback on one bank or the other, or in the water. I was anxious to get away

from those thick brown waters carrying down mouldering tree-trunks, clusters of foliage, and foul-smelling, fever-laden slime from Dakota, as soon as possible.

What was worse, the men were tired beyond words with their unceasing vigil. The horses were ill on account of the unhealthy water, which we ourselves could not use unless boiled for several hours over the coals. At length, at the end of the eighth day we were one and all on the opposite bank; not a single wagon had been broken, and only seven mules and horses were lost. Yet, that very day, the first shots were fired, for my men killed, and then, in accordance with the horrible custom of the desert, scalped three Indians who had tried to slip among the mules. As a result of this incident, six of the oldest warriors of the band of the Bloody Trails, who belonged to the tribe of the Pawnees, came to us in the evening of the following day. With sinister dignity they sat down by our fires and demanded compensation in horses and mules, announcing that if we refused, five hundred warriors would descend upon us without delay. But I did not fear these five hundred warriors, now that my caravan had crossed the river, and was protected by ramparts, for I knew that the delegates had been sent to us only because the savages were making use of this pretext to drive a bargain without making an attack, the success of which might be doubtful. I would have driven them away but for Lilian, for I wanted her to see this spectacle; and, indeed, as they sat motionless by the council fire, with eyes staring into the heart of the flames, she, from behind a wagon, in fear and curiosity gazed upon their garments, sewn together with human hair, their tomahawks with feathered handles and their faces painted black and red as a sign that they were prepared to give battle. In spite of these preparations I definitely declined to meet with their wishes, and, changing from a passive to an active attitude, I declared that if a single mule were to be found missing, I would seek them out myself, and spread the bones of all their five hundred warriors over the breadth of the prairie. They departed, stifling their wrath with an effort, and they cast their tomahawks over their heads to indicate war. But my words stuck in their memory; and when, as they were about to leave, two hundred of my men, prepared for this, rose up suddenly in a menacing fashion, and, clashing their arms, uttered a war-cry, our state of preparation definitely impressed itself upon the minds of the savages.

A few hours later, Henry Simpson, who had volunteered to follow the delegates, came back panting with the news that a large band of the Indians was approaching. Being well acquainted with the ways of the Indians, I alone, in the whole caravan, knew that these were barren threats, for the Indians were not sufficiently numerous to be able to meet the Kentucky long-range rifles, as they were merely armed with hickory-bows. I imparted this fact to Lilian to put her mind at rest, for she was trembling like a leaf in fear for my safety, but the others were sure that battle was inevitable, and the younger members, whose war-lust was aroused, were even eager to fight. And indeed we heard the howling of the Redskins without further delay. They drew up, however, at a distance of several gunshots, as if waiting for the opportune moment. All through the night huge fires made of cotton-wood and bunches of Missouri osier burned in our camp; the men kept guard by the wagons, and the terrified women sang psalms; the mules whinnied and neighed and bit each other, because they were not driven to their usual night shelter, but instead were closed in among the wagons; the dogs, scenting the presence of the Indians, howled: in a word, our camp was full of noise and warlike preparation. In the short intervals of silence, we heard the ill-omened moanings of the Indian outposts as they answered each other in the voice of the coyote. Round about midnight, the Indians attempted to fire the prairie, but the wet spring grass would not kindle, though not a single drop of rain had fallen for several days.

When, in the morning, I inspected the posts, I seized the opportunity to go to Lilian for a moment. I found her sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, her head resting in the lap of the good Aunt Atkins, who, armed with a bowie-knife, swore she would rather destroy the entire tribe of the Bloody Trails than let one of them approach her beloved child. As for me, I beheld that beautiful sleeping face with the love, not only of a man, but almost that of a mother, and, like Aunt Atkins, I would have cut to pieces anybody that menaced my love. For in her was my joy, in her my delight, and apart from her there was nothing but wandering and never-ending adventures. The best proof of this I had before me: the prairie stretching away to the horizon, the clash of arms, the nights spent on horseback, war, and the rapacious red-skinned bandits—whereas close beside me was the calm sleep of the lovely being who so trusted me

and believed in me that a word of mine was sufficient to persuade her that there would be no attack, and to let her fall asleep as safe as if she were under her father's roof.

Thus when I gazed on those two pictures, for the first time in my life I felt weary of my adventures and precarious existence; and at the same time knew I should find calm and quietude only at her side. If only we reach California, if only we reach it, I thought. . . . The hardships of the journey, of which only the easier half had been completed, had left their traces on that pale face, whilst there waited for us a rich and beautiful land, a warm sky, and endless spring. With such reflections I covered the feet of the sleeping girl with my overcoat to keep out the night cold, and then returned to the end of the camp, for such a thick fog was rising from the river that the Indians might have taken advantage of it to try their luck. The fires died down and grew pale; an hour later you could not have seen anybody ten paces away. I bade the guards call out every minute, and soon nothing was heard throughout the camp save a prolonged "All's well" passing from mouth to mouth like the words of a litany. The Indian camp on its side grew silent, as if stricken dumb. This made me uneasy. At dawn an immense weariness fell upon us, for God only knows how many nights the greater part of our men had passed without sleep, and, added to that, the heavy fog sent cold shivers through our frames.

I tried to decide whether it would not be better to ride down upon the Indians and scatter them to the four winds of the earth, instead of remaining rooted to the spot, waiting to see what the Indians would take it into their heads to do. This was not a wild lancer's whim, but a sheer necessity, for a daring attack followed by success might gain for us a big reputation, which, once spread among the savage tribes, would secure safety for us for the rest of the journey. In the end I left a hundred and thirty of my people within the ramparts under the command of the experienced prairie wolf, Smith, and I ordered a hundred others to mount their horses. We advanced cautiously but with good heart, for the cold was growing more and more severe, and this was at least a means of getting warm. At a distance of a couple of gun-shots we changed to a gallop, and with shouts and firing we stormed the camp of the savages. A bullet dispatched by a clumsy fellow in our ranks behind me whizzed close past my ear, but it only carried off my cap

Meantime, we were right upon the Indians, who were prepared for everything but attack from us, for this must have been the first time that travellers had sought out their besiegers. Accordingly panic blinded them, and they dispersed in all directions, howling for fear like wild beasts, and dying without any resistance. Only a small detachment of them pressed on to the river when they saw that all other means of escape were barred, and defended themselves with stubborn resistance, preferring to throw themselves into the water rather than surrender.

Their spears made of sharpened deer-horn and their tomahawks of hard flint were not very dangerous, but they handled them with great dexterity. However, we broke through their ranks in the twinkling of an eye, and I myself captured a big fellow, whose hand I broke along with his axe in struggling to snatch the weapon. We captured a few dozen horses, but they were so savage and high-spirited that they were useless to us. We took about a score of prisoners, all of whom were wounded. I had their wounds carefully dressed, and, at Lilian's request, presented them with blankets, arms, and horses that were needed for those who were severely wounded, and then let them go free. The poor creatures, who were convinced that they would be tied to the stake and tortured, and who had already begun to chant their monotonous death hymns, were at first all amazement at what was happening to them. They thought they were being released in order to be hunted down in accordance with the Indian custom. However, when they saw that nothing of the kind was threatening them, they departed, praising our valour and the charity of the Pale Flower, which name they applied to Lilian.

But the day was to end with a sad event which cast a shadow over our joy at this great victory and the results it was likely to produce. None of our men had been killed, but many of them were severely wounded, and the worst case was Henry Simpson, whose enthusiasm had carried him too far into the battle. That night his state became so critical that the agony began. He wanted to impart something to me, but the poor fellow was unable to speak, for his jaw had been crushed by a tomahawk. He could only mumble, "Pardon, my captain!" and then fell into convulsions. I guessed what was troubling him when I remembered the bullet which had whizzed past my ear that morning, and I forgave him as befitted a Christian. I knew, too, that he took with him to the grave a profound

though secret love for Lilian, and that he must have sought death purposely. He departed towards midnight, and was buried under a gigantic cotton-tree, on whose bark I engraved a cross with my knife.

V

NEXT day we moved on and had before us a prairie that was even vaster, flatter, and wilder than before, a country that had rarely known the imprint of the white man's foot; to sum up, we were in Nebraska. During the first days we proceeded quickly enough across the treeless spaces, though the journeying was difficult on account of our lack of fuel. The banks of the Platte, which flowed across these boundless tracts, were covered with dense growths of osier and willow, but as they were flat the river had flooded them, so that we could not draw near. In the meantime we passed the nights by the small fires made of buffalo refuse which had not been sufficiently dried by the sun, and so smouldered with a blue smoke rather than burned. We were making painful efforts to reach the Big Blue River, where we expected to find plenty of fuel. The surrounding district showed every sign of being a virgin land. Again and again herds of antelopes, tawny-skinned and white-bellied, dispersed before our caravan. Now and then from the wave of the grass there emerged the monstrous shaggy head of a buffalo with bloodshot eyes and steaming nostrils; and vast herds of them could be seen moving about like black specks on the horizon.

In some places we passed by regular systems of mounds thrown up by the prairie dogs. The Indians did not at first show themselves, but a few days later we sighted three savages adorned with feathers on horseback, but they vanished at once like phantoms. Later I learned that the lesson I had given them by the Missouri had made the name of "Big-ara" (for this was how they changed "Big Ralph") the terror of the murderous tribes of prairie robbers, whereas the generosity I had displayed to the prisoners appealed to these savage and cruel tribes who were not, however, devoid of chivalrous instincts.

When we came to the Big Blue River I decided to encamp on its forest-clad banks for ten days. The latter half of the road which lay before us would be much more difficult than the first, for beyond the prairies lay the Rocky Mountains, and farther on the "bad lands" of Utah and Nevada. Our mules and horses

were now worn out and lean in spite of plenty of good food, so it was necessary to restore their strength by a prolonged rest. To this end we encamped in the triangle formed by the Big Blue and Beaver Creek. The strong position secured by the two rivers and a file of wagons was nearly impregnable, particularly as we had wood and water on the spot. Thus our camp duties were reduced to a minimum, excessive vigilance was unnecessary, and our people could enjoy repose. These were the best days of our journey. The weather was glorious, and the nights were so warm that we could sleep under the open sky.

In the morning my men would go off to hunt, and at midday would come back laden with antelopes and prairie hens, of which there were millions in our neighbourhood. The rest of the day we passed in eating and sleeping, in singing and shooting for sport at the wild geese, flocks of which constantly flew over our heads. There have been no better, no happier days in my life than those ten days. From morn till night Lillian and I hardly left each other, and life in common beginning in this way, instead of with cursory interviews, convinced me more and more that I should go on loving that sweet, good being for ever. I learned to know her much more deeply and intimately. Often at night, instead of sleeping I would try to discover the reason why she had become so dear to me, and as necessary to my life as the very air we breathe. I loved her noble countenance and her long tresses, her eyes, blue as the skies of Nebraska, and her slender, graceful form which seemed to say to me: "Support me and defend me, for I could not go on in the world without you." Yes, God is my witness that I loved everything about her, yes, every one of her poor garments; there was some irresistible force that drove me to her so that I could not help myself. But she had yet another charm for me, and that was her sweet tenderness. I have met many women in my life, but I have never known such an angel, and I never shall again. When I think of it, an eternal sadness overcomes me. The soul within her was as tender as the flower that closes up its cup when any one draws near.

She was extremely sensitive to every word of mine; she felt and reflected every one of my thoughts like some deep transparent water that mirrors all that passes over its margin. Her pure heart surrendered to love with gentle confusion, and I realized how deeply she must have loved me when she yielded

and sacrificed herself to it. In such moments, every noble sentiment that exists in a man's soul was fused into one great sentiment for her. Hers was such a simple, modest nature that I had to convince her that there was no sin in love, and I was always troubled as to how to do it. In these emotions the ten days in the fork of the rivers passed by; and it was there that the zenith of my happiness was fulfilled. Once, at dawn, we went for a walk up Beaver Creek. I wanted to show her the beavers, a whole kingdom of which flourished not much more than half a mile from the caravan. Moving cautiously through the undergrowth, we soon arrived at our goal. There was a sort of bay or lake made by the stream. It was surrounded by tall hickory trees, and the banks themselves were covered with willows whose branches curved deep into the water. The dam made by the beavers higher up across the stream stopped its course, and kept the water in the pool always at the same level, and through its shimmering surface the houses of these clever animals rose up like miniature cupolas.

No human foot had ever penetrated into that recess closed in by trees on every side. We cautiously removed the slender willow branches, and gazed on the water which was as smooth and blue as glass. The beavers were not yet at their work. The little settlement of the waters was obviously still asleep, and everything was so quiet over the pool that I could hear Lilian's breathing as her little golden head rested on my cheek in a space left by the branches. I put my arm round her waist to support her on the steep bank, and we waited patiently, our eyes drinking in everything that they encountered. Accustomed to life in the deserts, I loved Nature like my own mother, and I felt in a simple way the joy of God when He beholds the universe.

It was very early in the morning: the glow of dawn had barely set in, and reddened through the branches of the hickory trees. The dew dropped down the willow leaves, and there was more and more light. Then the prairie hens came to the opposite bank. They were grey with black breasts and tufted heads. They drank water, stretching their beaks upwards. "Oh, Ralph, how nice!" whispered Lilian. As for me, I thought of naught save a cottage in a lonely canyon, of her with me, and a rosary of tranquil days stretching away into eternity, and sublime calm unto the end. So it seemed to us that to this joy of nature we added our own joy, to this peace our own peace, and

to this dawn the dawn of happiness we had in our souls. Mean-time the smooth face of the water grew wrinkled, and there emerged a beaver's wet whiskered head, all pink in the morning light, then another, and the two animals made for the dam, muttering and cleaving the mirror of the water with their little mouths. They climbed upon the dam, sat on their hind legs, and uttered a scream; and then heads, large and small, appeared as if by magic, and a splash was heard in the pool. The herd of beavers seemed at first to be merely playing, bathing, and calling out, in their own way, in sheer enjoyment. But the first pair, looking round from the top of the dam, suddenly made a whistling sound with their nostrils, and, in the twinkling of an eye, half of the colony were on the dam, whereas the other half were making for the banks to disappear beneath the fringes of the willows where the water began to bubble, and sounds as of wood cut by a saw announced that the little creatures were busy gnawing the bark of the branches.

For a long time Lilian and I watched the manœuvres and pleasures of this animal life, happy until man comes to disturb it. Suddenly Lilian, wishing to change her position, happened to move the branches, and in a flash everything was gone. Only the rocking of the water left any sign that it held something in its depths. But after a moment the water too subsided, and we were again enveloped in calm, broken only by the woodpeckers, tapping on the hard bark of the hickory trees in quest of worms. Meanwhile, the sun rose high above the trees and it grew very warm. As Lilian was not tired yet we resolved to go round the pool. On the way we came upon another small brook which cut across the forest to flow into the pool from the opposite side. Lilian could not cross it, so I had to carry her. In spite of her objections, I gathered her up like a child, and entered the brook. But this brook was a brook of temptation. Fearing lest she should fall, Lilian put her arms about my neck and clung tightly to me, concealing her blushing face against my shoulder, and I pressed my lips upon her brow, and so I carried her across the brook. On arriving at the opposite bank, I wanted to carry her farther, but she cast me off almost violently. A sort of uneasiness fell upon us; and she began to look about her as if afraid, and her face grew now pale, now flushed. We continued to walk on. I took her hand and pressed it to my heart. At moments I was afraid of myself. The day grew hot; heat poured down from the sky upon the earth, and the wind

was at rest. The leaves of the hickory trees hung motionless. Only the woodpeckers went on tapping on the bark as before, but everything else seemed to fall asleep and grow lifeless with the heat. It seemed to me that some magic spell had been cast over the forest, and after that, I remembered nothing save the fact that Lilian was with me, and that we were alone. Meantime she must have grown tired, for her breath came in short loud gasps, and on her face, that was habitually pale, there appeared hectic spots of colour. I asked whether she were not tired and would not like to rest. "Oh, no, no," she answered quickly, as if resisting the mere idea, but after taking a few steps she suddenly swayed and whispered:

"No; I really can't go on any more."

Then I took her in my arms again and went with this precious burden down to the margin of the pool, where the overhanging willow-branches formed shadowy passages. I laid her on the moss of one of these bowers and knelt down beside her, but when I gazed upon her my heart almost ceased to beat. Her face had grown pale, white as linen, and her wide-open eyes watched me in fear.

"Lilian, what is the matter, dear?" I exclaimed. "It is I who am with you."

Saying this I bent over her feet and showered kisses upon them.

"Lilian!" I went on. "My heart's choice, my wife!"

When I pronounced the last word a shiver ran through her body from head to foot, and suddenly she cast her arms about my neck with an unusual, feverish impetus.

"My dear, my dear, my husband!"—and then everything sank away from me, and it seemed as if we were swept on with the whole universe. . . .

To-day I don't know how it happened, but when I awoke from that ecstasy and recovered my senses, the glow shone again through the branches of the hickory trees, but it was the glow of sunset. The woodpeckers had ceased to tap on the bark. Another flaming sunset smiled from the depths of the pool to the sunset of the sky. The water-creatures were asleep. The evening was full of charm, all quiet, and impregnated with the red light. It was time to go back to the caravan. When we had left the weeping willows behind I gazed on Lilian. There was neither sorrow nor anxiety on her face; only a calm resignation shone in her eyes raised to heaven, and her blessed head was encircled with a nimbus of solemn sacrifice. When I offered

her my arm she leaned her head upon my shoulder, and with eyes fixed on the sky said to me:

"Ralph, tell me again that I am your wife; tell me that many times over."

So as neither in the deserts nor in the place whither we were going were there any other vows save those of the heart, I knelt down in the forest, and when she had knelt down at my side I said:

"In the presence of the sky, the earth, and God Himself, I take thee, Lilian Morris, to be my wedded wife. Amen."

To this she replied:

"Now I am yours for ever, and until death us do part I am your wife, Ralph."

From that moment we were married; and thereafter she was not merely my beloved, but my legal wife. And we were happy in that thought. I was especially happy, because there rose up in my heart a new sentiment of sacred reverence both for Lilian and for myself, of a great and solemn dignity through which love was ennobled and blessed. Hand in hand, with heads held proudly and steadfast eyes, we returned to the caravan to our people who had grown anxious on our behalf. Some of them had ridden out in various directions to seek for us, and later on I learned to my astonishment that some had passed by the pool without discovering our presence, for we had not heard their shouts. Still, lest they should misjudge us, I summoned all of them together, and when they had gathered round, I took Lilian by the hand and announced:

"Gentlemen! Bear witness that in your presence I declare this woman who stands at my side to be my wedded wife; and be ready to give evidence to this effect at court, before the law, and before all who, whether in the east or in the west, may make any inquiries."

"All right, and hurrah for you both!" responded the miners. Then old Smith put the customary question to Lilian, and asked her whether she was willing to take me for her husband, and when she answered "Yes," we were legally married in the eyes of the world. In the distant prairies of the west and all over the border lands where there are no towns and no judges or churches, the wedding ceremony always takes place in this way; and even to-day, whosoever in the States declares the woman with whom he lives under the same roof to be his wife makes a declaration that stands for all the documents of the

law. Thus, no one was astonished, or regarded my marriage with any other sentiment than the respect that the custom always met with. Moreover, everybody was pleased, for although I kept them under a discipline that was more severe than with other captains, they knew very well that it was for their own good, and day by day they showed more and more friendliness towards me. As for my wife, she was always the very apple of their eye. Thus festivities and merry-making followed my announcement. The fires were lit. The Scots brought forth their bagpipes from their wagons, for we were very fond of their music, which was associated with pleasant memories for us. The Americans took to their beloved knuckle-bones, and amid songs and shouts and pistol shots our wedding-night passed away. Aunt Atkins embraced Lilian again and again, laughing and crying by turns, and lighting her pipe which went out repeatedly. What stirred me most was the following rite, that was customary with the wandering element of the population of the States who passed the greater part of their life in wagons. When the moon appeared in the sky, the men placed bunches of burning osier in their rifle-rods and the whole procession headed by old Smith conducted us from one wagon to another, inquiring of Lilian before each one:

"Is this your home?" My love answered every time, "No," and we continued our round. Before Aunt Atkins's wagon very real emotion overcame everybody, for it was the wagon in which Lilian had travelled up till then. Accordingly, when she answered even there a sob, "No," Aunt Atkins howled like a wounded buffalo, and clasping Lilian in her arms she repeated, "My little one, my sweet," interrupted with bitter sobs. Lilian cried too, and then all those hard hearts unhardened for a moment, and there was not a single pair of eyes that was not full of tears. When we drew near my wagon, I hardly recognized it, it was so adorned with flowers and foliage. Here the men raised the flaming bundles and Smith asked in a voice that had grown louder and graver:

"Is this your home?"

"That's it! That's it!" replied Lilian softly.

Then every man bared his head, and the stillness was so great that I heard the whir of the fire and the hissing of the burnt twigs as they fell to the ground, and the grey-haired miner, stretching out his knotted hands over us, said: "May the Lord bless you, and your house. Amen."

A triple "Hurrah" followed the blessing, after which everybody departed, leaving me alone with my beloved wife. She leaned her head upon my breast and whispered, "For ever, for ever"; and in that moment there were more stars in our souls than in the firmament.

VI

NEXT morning I left my wife still sleeping, and went to look for flowers for her. As I searched I repeated to myself again and again, "You are married!" and this idea filled me with such joy that I raised my eyes to heaven and thanked God that He had let me live long enough to experience that moment when a man becomes a real man, and completes his life with that of another being whom he cherishes beyond everything. Now I had something of my very own in the world, and though my hearth and home was only a canvas wagon, yet I felt richer than before, and eyed my previous wanderings with pity and amazement that I could once have lived like that. It had never before occurred to me what a lot of happiness may be contained in the mere word "wife," if you give this name to your very heart's blood, and the best part of your own soul. I must have loved her for a long time as I saw the world only through the medium of Lilian, associated everything with her and understood it only in so far as it concerned her. Now when I said "wife," it meant to me "my wife and mine for ever": and I thought I should go mad with joy, for I could scarcely realize that such a poor devil as myself could possess such a treasure. For what did I lack? Nothing. If only the prairies had been warmer, and safer for her, and I had not bound myself to bring my people whither I had promised, I would have joyfully given up going to California, and settled even in Nebraska provided Lilian were with me. I was going there to dig for gold, yet now this idea seemed to me ridiculous. What other wealth could I discover now that I had her? I asked myself. What need had we of gold? Well, I would choose out a canyon in which it would be always spring. I would fell tree-trunks and make me a dwelling and I would live with her, and by my plough and my rifle I would win our daily bread, so that we should not go hungry. So ran my thoughts as I looked for the flowers, and when I had picked enough I returned to the caravan. On the way I came upon Aunt Atkins.

"The little one? Sleeping?" she asked me, taking her inseparable pipe out of her mouth.

"Yes, she's sleeping," I replied.

At this Aunt Atkins winked her eye and said:

"Ah! You rascal!"

But the "little one" was not sleeping any longer, for we saw her soon after as she left the wagon, and, shading her eyes, scanned the prairie. When she saw me, she ran to meet me, all fresh and rosy as the morning, and fell into my open arms. She gave me her little lips, exclaiming:

"*Dzień dobry! Dzień dobry!*" Then raising herself on tip-toe and looking into my eyes, she asked with a mischievous smile, "Am I your wife?"

Was she my wife? What other answer was there but to kiss and caress her without end? And it was thus that our time passed in the fork of the rivers, for old Smith took over all my duties until the moment when we moved on. Thus we were able to visit once more our beavers and our brook, across which I now carried her unresisting. One day we went in a canoe made of redwood up the Blue River, and at one of the bends I pointed out to her close at hand the buffaloes striking the limy banks with their horns, which causes their foreheads to be usually covered with a sort of armour of dry lime. Two days before we moved on we stopped making these excursions, on one occasion because of the Indians who appeared in the neighbourhood, and then because my dear love was not well. She grew pale and lost strength, and when I asked her what was the matter, she answered me only with a smile, and assured me that she was quite well. I even kept watch over her while she slept and carefully tucked her up to prevent the wind from reaching her; and I was so worried that I grew quite ill myself. Aunt Atkins, of course, winked her left eye mysteriously when alluding to Lilian's indisposition, and blew out such a thick cloud of smoke that you could not see her behind it. However, my anxiety did not abate, the more so because sad thoughts crossed Lilian's mind from time to time. She got it into her head that it was not right to love each other as much as we did, and once, laying her wonderful little finger on the Bible, which she used to read every day, she said sadly:

"Read this, Ralph."

I looked, and a strange foreboding clutched my heart when I read: "*Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped*

and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever ?" and she added when I had finished:

"And if the Lord is angry with us, I am sure He will be good, and will punish me only."

I calmed her by telling her that love is only an angel that rises from two human souls to God and carries the glory of the earth up to Him. After this we did not talk about such things any more, for preparations for the rest of the march began, the inspection of the wagons and beasts, and thousands of petty duties that took up all my time.

When at last the moment for departing arrived, we said good-bye to the fork of the rivers, sad at heart, for it had witnessed so many happy days; but when I saw our caravan stretching once more across the prairie, the wagons one after another and the string of mules, it was a relief to me to think that every day would bring us nearer and nearer to the end of our journey, and that in a few months we should come in sight of California, towards which we were making amid such hardships.

The first days of the journey were somewhat unsuccessful. Between the Missouri and the foot of the Rocky Mountains, vast portions of the prairie rose steeply uphill, for which reason our beasts grew quickly tired and had often to rest. Again, we could not draw near the giant River Platte, for, though the flood had abated, it was the season of the big spring hunt, and consequently bands of Indians wandered near the river, stalking the herds of buffaloes as they moved northwards. The night watches grew harder and more fatiguing. Not a single night passed without an alarm, and, on the fourth day after we left the encampment, I again put to flight another considerable band of red-skinned robbers, just as they were trying to stampede our mules. But what bothered us most was the fact that we were obliged to pass the nights without a fire, for as we were unable to approach the Platte we were often without fuel, and in the morning showers would fall so that the buffalo dung which served as fuel was all soaked, and would not easily burn.

Another source of uneasiness was the trek of the buffaloes. Sometimes we caught sight of herds of several thousand head drifting over the horizon like a cloud, and crushing everything before them. If such a herd crossed our path we should have perished inevitably. To make matters worse, the prairie suddenly swarmed with all sorts of beasts of prey, for the buffaloes

were followed, not only by Indians, but also by the terrible grizzly bears, and the great jaguars, and the big wolves of Kansas and the Indian territory. At the small brooks by which we pitched our camp at night, we saw at sunset great herds of all the denizens of the prairie coming to drink after the day's heat. One day a bear attacked our half-caste guide, Wichita, and had I with Smith and another guide, Tom, not rescued him in time, he would certainly have been torn to pieces. I crushed the monster's head with my axe with a blow so powerful that the hickory handle broke in two. Nevertheless, the beast attacked me, and fell only after Tom and Smith had shot him in the ear with their guns. These wild animals were so bold that at night they would come quite close to our caravan, and in a week we killed two of them only a hundred paces from our wagons. Our dogs made such a noise from morn till night because of this that one could not sleep.

Once upon a time such a life pleased me; when, a year before, even greater hardships had been my lot in Arkansas, I was as happy as a lord, but now, when I thought of my dear wife in the wagon, trembling for my life instead of sleeping, and wasting away with anxiety, I wished Indians, bears, and jaguars at the devil, and prayed instead for the speediest way of ensuring peace to that fragile and delicate being so dear to me that I fain would have carried her in my arms till the end of time. Thus it happened that a great load fell from my heart when, at the end of three weeks of such troubles, I sighted the chalky white waters of the river now called the Republican River, then without an English name. The wide belt of black osiers, which made a mourning lining to the white waters, would supply us with plenty of fuel, and although this variety of osier bursts in the fire with a loud report and rattles sparks far and wide, it burns much better than soaking buffalo dung. Here I decided to rest for two days, particularly because the rocks scattered here and there betrayed the neighbouring presence of the wellnigh impassable slopes of the Rocky Mountains. We were at a considerable height above sea-level, as was evident from the cool nights.

The difference in temperature between day and night had unpleasant effects. Several men, old Smith among them, caught fever, and were obliged to take to their wagons. The germs of their malady must have been caught on the unhealthy banks of the Missouri, and the hardships they had endured

favoured its outbreak. However, the proximity of the mountains filled us with hope of a speedy recovery. My wife, meantime, nursed them with a devotion that is only found in such an angelic disposition.

But at the same time she did not look well herself. Many a time it happened that, waking in the morning, and my first glance falling upon her delicate features, my heart would beat anxiously when I noted her pallor, and the black shadows under her eyes. It often happened that as I watched her in this way, she would awaken, smile at me, and fall asleep again. Then I felt that I would give half of my own iron constitution only to reach California.

But it was a long, long way off. At the end of the two days we moved on, and soon after leaving the Republican River in the south we followed the fork of the White Man, since we were making for the southern fork of the Platte, the great part of which was in Colorado. The ascent each day grew more and more arduous, for in truth we were in a canyon between granite rocks, towering higher and higher afar off on each side, either separate peaks or prolonged like a wall, now a narrow passage, now retreating in both directions. We did not lack fuel, for every nook and cranny of the rocks was clad with dwarf firs and oaks. Here and there springs trickled down the walls of stone. Beasts of prey that vanished at our approach jumped along the rocky barriers. The air was cold and keen and invigorating. At the end of the week the fever abated, but our mules and horses, which had had to exchange the juicy grass of Nebraska for the furze that was the main plant here, grew leaner and leaner, and panted more and more loudly as they drew up our heavily loaded wagons.

Finally, one afternoon, we saw before us a mirage of pointed clouds, half-dissolved in the distant mists, all white and gold and azure on their crests, and stretching their gigantic mass from earth to heaven.

At this vision a shout arose throughout the caravan. Men climbed upon the roofs of the wagons to get a better view, and shouts of "Rocky Mountains! Rocky Mountains!" were heard on all sides. Hats waved in the breeze and faces were lit up with joy.

In this way the Americans greeted the Rocky Mountains, and as for me, I went to my wagon, and pressing my wife to my breast once more vowed fidelity to her in my soul in the presence

of those lofty altars of God from which radiated a solemn mystery of impregnable strength. The sun was just about to set, and soon twilight came down over the entire land; the giant forms alone, lit up by the last rays, seemed like immense heaps of live coals and lava. Then the fiery glow began to pass into a violet growing ever darker, and at last all sunk into one vast darkness through which the stars, the sparkling eyes of the night, regarded us from on high.

Still we were about a hundred and fifty miles, at least, from the principal chain. Thus, the next day it vanished from our sight, cut off by the rocks, and later on it appeared and disappeared in accordance with the loops of the road. We moved forward slowly, for fresh obstacles kept on presenting themselves, and, though we kept as close as possible to the river, we had often to go out of our way when the banks were too steep, and seek a passage through the neighbouring valleys. The ground here was covered with grey furze and wild peas, which were not good even for the mules to eat, and which obstructed our progress because the tall strong stalks twisted about the wheels and impeded their movement.

Now and then we came across cracks in the ground which were impossible to cross, and, as they sometimes extended for hundreds of yards, we had again to make a detour. Time after time our guides, Wichita and Tom, came back to report new difficulties. The ground would suddenly bristle with rocks, or unexpectedly fall away. One day we thought that we were going along a valley when all of a sudden we found that it was a shelf of rock, and gaping before us was a bottomless abyss down whose vertical sides our gaze was lost in dizziness. The gigantic oaks in the depths of the abyss looked like tiny shrubs, and the buffaloes among them like beetles. We were penetrating farther and farther into a rocky land of boulders, land-slides, and precipices, where stones had been hurled down one after the other in rapid volley. Echoes cast back by the granite vaults repeated over and over again the oaths of the drivers and the neighing of the mules. Our wagons, which on the firm ground of the prairie appeared large and grand, dwindled perceptibly before our eyes here in the presence of the rocky giants, and vanished into the throats of the canyons as if swallowed up by mighty jaws. Small waterfalls which the Indians call "laughing waters" broke up our path at every hundred yards. The hardships were exhausting our strength and that of the beasts, but the mountains

looming up on the horizon, seemed ever in the same misty distance. Happily, our weariness was overcome by our curiosity, fed by the ever-changing vistas. None of my people, not even those who were born in the Alleghanies, had ever seen such wild country. I myself gazed in amazement at the canyons, on the brinks of which the unbridled fancy of nature seemed to have wrought castles, fortresses, and whole cities of stone. Here and there we came upon Indians, but even these were different from their brethren of the prairie, being more savage and less gregarious.

The sight of white people aroused in them mingled sentiments of fear and bloodthirstiness. They seemed even more cruel than their fellows in Nebraska. They were taller, their complexion was swarthier, and their wide nostrils and furtive gaze gave them an expression as of caged wild beasts. Their movements, too, were sly and stealthy, like those of animals. When they spoke they placed their thumbs on their cheeks, which were painted alternately in blue and white stripes. Their arms consisted of tomahawks and bows made of some kind of hard thorn, which were so strong that my men could not have bent them. Had the savages been very numerous they might have been dangerous, for an unconquerable rapacity was one of their characteristics. Fortunately they were few; the largest band we ever encountered did not exceed fifteen warriors. Their names were the Tabagees, the Weeminones, and the Yampas. Though our guide Wichita could converse in all the Indian tongues, he completely failed to understand their speech, for which reason we could not comprehend why they all pointed to the Rocky Mountains and then at us, and then opened and closed their palms as though they were seeking to signify certain numbers.

Our road grew so difficult that, in spite of the greatest efforts, we could not do more than fifteen miles a day. Worse still, our horses, less enduring than the mules and more fastidious, began to die off one by one. The men, too, were losing strength because for whole days they were obliged to draw the wagons by ropes in order to assist the mules or to help the wagons over the difficult places. Gradually the weaker members yielded to discouragement. A few of them suffered from pains in their bones, and one, who through straining himself had bled from his mouth, died after three days, cursing the moment when he had decided to quit the harbour of New York. We were then

at the worst portion of our road, by the small river called by the Indians Kiona. The rocks, of course, were not as steep here as in eastern Colorado, but the whole land within view bristled with boulders, large and small, piled in disorder. These boulders, both those that were erect and those which had fallen, looked like devastated cemeteries with overturned tombs. These were the real "bad lands" of Colorado, corresponding to those which stretch across the north of Nebraska. We left them at the end of a week only by dint of enormous efforts.

VII

WE did not rest until we came to the foot of the Rocky Mountains. Fear overwhelmed me when I saw close at hand this whole world of granite, whose sides were wrapped in mist, and whose peaks disappeared in eternal clouds and snow. Their grandeur and silent majesty made me feel my own pettiness; so I prayed to God in all humility to permit me to lead my beloved wife, my people, and my wagons, safe through these infinite walls. After that prayer, I penetrated into the jaws and passages of stone with more courage. When they closed behind us, we were cut off from the rest of the world: above our heads was the sky and a few croaking eagles, and, compassing us about, granite without end, a veritable labyrinth of corridors, vaults, canyons, crevices, precipices, and towers, silent edifices, and mighty walls sunk in sleep. It was all so solemn, and our souls laboured under such an oppression amid this mass of rock, that it became natural to whisper instead of speaking in a normal tone. It seemed to us that the road was always closing up before us, and that a voice was saying to us, "Advance no farther, for here the way ends!" It seemed to us that we were violating a secret upon which God Himself had set His seal. At night, when those protruding forms grouped about us grew black as crape, when the moon made a silver border about the peaks, and strange shadows rose up from the "loughing waters," a shudder ran through even the boldest of the adventurers. We passed whole hours around the fires, gazing with superstitious dread into the black depths of the canyons lit up by the red glare, as if waiting for some terrible thing to emerge.

One day we discovered in the nook of a rock the skeleton of a man, and though from the hair that still clung to his skull and the weapons we recognized an Indian, foreboding, nevertheless,

clutched at our hearts, for the grinning corpse seemed to warn us that whosoever lost his way in these places would never find it again. As, on the same day, the guide, Tom, fell from a rocky shelf with his horse and was instantly killed, sadness enveloped the whole caravan. Before, we moved forward with noise and merrymaking. Now even the drivers ceased to curse, and the caravan journeyed in a silence interrupted only by the creaking of the wheels. The mules grew more and more restive, and once one of the teams stopped short as if rooted to the spot. The rest of the wagons following behind were also obliged to come to a standstill. The thing that troubled me most was that I could not be at my wife's side in the most difficult moments in which she needed my presence and support more than ever. But I had to be in a hundred places at once, to give the example, and to foster courage and confidence. My men, of course, faced every difficulty with the stubborn courage that is characteristic of the Americans, but they had reached the limit of their strength. My constitution alone stood the test of all the hardships. There were nights when I had no more than a couple of hours' rest. I drew the wagons like the others: I appointed the guards and inspected the camp: in a word, I did twice the work of anybody else. But happiness must have increased my strength, for when I came to my wagon, tired and exhausted, I found everything I held dearest in the world; a faithful heart, beloved hands that wiped the sweat from my brow. Lilian, though unwell, would never go to sleep before my arrival; and whenever I rebuked her, she would close my lips with a kiss, and bid me not be angry. I would send her to sleep holding my hand. Many a night she would awaken and wrap me up in the beaver-skins to make me more comfortable. Always gentle, sweet, loving, and tender, she made me idolize her, and kiss the hem of her gown as the most sacred thing; and our wagon was as a holy place. Tiny though she was in the presence of those towering rocks to which she would often raise her eyes, she screened them from me; by her side they disappeared, and I saw only her amid those giants. No wonder, then, that whereas the strength of others failed, mine never did, and I knew that I should never lose it whilst there was the need of defending her.

After three weeks' travel, we finally reached a canyon formed by the White River. At its entrance, Indians of the Uintah tribe set a trap for us which caused a certain amount of confusion

in our caravan; but when their red arrows penetrated the roof of my wife's wagon, I led my men against them so energetically that they were scattered at once, and three-quarters of them killed. When the only prisoner we had taken alive, a youth of sixteen, recovered from his fear, he began to point at us, and then to the west with the same gestures as the Yampas. He seemed to want to tell us that white men were near, but we could not believe it to be true. But it was true. You can easily imagine my men's surprise and delight when, two days later, descending from an elevated plateau, we beheld, not only wagons, but also recently constructed log-huts in the low-lying valley at our feet. The huts were placed in a circle in the centre of which there rose a big windowless shed. Along the valley flowed a brook across which herds of mules wandered, watched by horsemen. The presence of people of my own race in this place filled me with astonishment which soon turned to fear when I thought that they might be outlaws hiding in the desert in order to escape capital punishment because of the crimes they had committed. I had experience enough to realize that these sort of outcasts were wont to go into the most lonely out-of-the-way regions where they gathered together in extremely well-disciplined bands. They were often even founders of new communities that lived at first by incursions into the well-populated districts, and it was only later on that, owing to a great influx of population, they turned into well-governed states. I had come upon outlaws many a time up the Mississippi when leading the squatter's life, floating timber down from New Orleans, and I had had many a bloody skirmish with them; and so was well acquainted with their cruelty and love of fighting.

I would not have feared them had Lillian not been among us, but at the thought of the danger that might threaten her if we lost the fight and I were killed, the hair of my head stood on end, and for the first time in my life I felt like the worst of cowards. I was convinced that if they were outlaws fighting was inevitable, and if it were so, it would be a much more difficult business than with the Indians.

Accordingly, I warned my men at once of the imminent danger, and drew them up in battle array. I resolved either to perish myself, or to crush this nest of hornets to its very foundation, and therefore determined to be the first to attack. Meantime, the men of the valley noticed us, and two horsemen

made towards us at full gallop. This came as a great relief to me, for outlaws would not send envoys. And, indeed, they proved to be hunters from an American fur-trading company who had pitched their summer camp in this place. Thus, instead of a battle, we were to meet with a hospitable welcome and every sort of assistance on the part of these stern but honest desert hunters. They received us with open arms, and we thanked God, Who, pitying our misery, gave us such sweet repose. For it was two and a half months since we had left the Big Blue River: our strength was exhausted, and our mules were half dead. Here we could rest for a week or so in safety and complete repose; both ourselves and our beasts.

It was a real rescue. Mr. Thorston, the captain of the band, was a man of education and intelligence, and when he discovered that I was not an ordinary prairie ruffian, he at once made friends with me, and offered Lilian and me his hut to live in, for her health was sinking fast.

I made her keep to her bed for two days. She was so tired that for the first twenty-four hours she hardly opened her eyes. During this time I watched by her side lest anything should disturb her rest. I sat by her bed and watched her for whole hours. At the end of two days she was so rested that she could go out of doors. However, I would not permit her to go about any work. My men, too, slept on the spot like logs for the first two days. Only after that did we take to repairing our wagons and to washing our linen. The worthy hunters gave us hearty assistance in every way. They were mostly Canadians, employed by the trading company. They spent the winter hunting, trapping beavers and killing skunks and martens, and in the summer they went to the summer camps where were the temporary fur-stores. The skins, rough-cured, were sent by convoy eastwards. These men, who hired themselves out for several years at a time, had work to do that was hard beyond words, for they were obliged to go into distant and virgin lands which, though abounding in beasts, swarmed with dangers, in particular from the Redskins, who were always at war. It was true that their wages were quite high, but most of them served not for gain, but because they loved the life of the desert, the adventures that were never lacking. Thus they were chosen men, strong and healthy and capable of facing any hardships. The sight of their huge frames, their fur caps, and long rifles recalled to my wife the novels of Cooper, which she had

read in Boston, and therefore she watched the camp and its daily conduct with great curiosity. The self-imposed discipline was like that of an order of chivalry, and Thorston, who was both the agent of the company and its head, enjoyed complete military authority. At the same time they were a people of uncommon honesty, and so the time we spent among them passed very agreeably. They in their turn liked our caravan, and said they had never seen such a well-disciplined and well-organized band. Thorston, before us all, lent his approval to my scheme of taking the northern route instead of that via St. Louis and Kansas. He told us that a caravan of three hundred people, led by one Markwood, had chosen the latter route, and after manifold sufferings through the heat and locusts, they had lost their teams, and were ultimately cut down by the Arapahoe Indians. The Canadian hunters learned of this from the Arapahoes themselves, whom they had beaten in their turn in a great battle, and from whom they took more than a hundred scalps, Markwood's being one. This piece of news greatly affected my men, so much so that old Smith, who was the most experienced rover, and who had at first demurred at the route through Nebraska, told me before all present that I was "smarter" than he, and that I could teach him a good many things. Our stay in the hospitable summer camp completely restored our forces. Besides the steadfast friendship I formed with Thorston, I made the acquaintance of one Mick, renowned throughout the States, who did not belong to the camp, but accompanied by a certain Lincoln and Kit Carson led a wandering life in the desert. This strange trio fought regular battles against whole tribes of Indians and their skill and superhuman courage always gave them the victory. The mere name of Mick, of whom many a book is written nowadays, was so full of menace to the Indians that this single word meant more to them than treaties with the Government of the States. So the latter employed him as a mediator, and finally appointed him governor over Oregon. When I met him he was about fifty, but his hair was as black as the feathers of a raven, and goodness of heart was blended in his eyes with strength and indomitable courage. Moreover, he was held to be the strongest man in the States at wrestling. I was, to the astonishment of all present, the first man whom he could not overthrow. This great-hearted man was very fond of Lilian, and blessed her whenever he called on us; and before our leavetaking he

gave her a pair of beautiful little moccasins which he had made himself out of doe-skin. The gift came at an opportune moment, for my poor wife had not a single pair of shoes that was not worn into holes.

At last we set out upon the next part of our journey, with favourable omens, supplied with exact information as to which of the canyons we should follow, and provided with all kinds of salt meat. Nay more, the honest Thorston exchanged my worn-out mules for his strong well-rested beasts. Then Mick, who had been to California, told us marvellous tales, not only of its riches, but of the pure air and the fine forests of oaks and the canyons without their equal throughout the States; and at once a great confidence rose in our hearts. For we were not aware of the crosses which would be our portion before we reached the promised land. As we left the camp behind we waved our hats for a long time to the honest Canadians to bid them remember us. The day of departure was engraved on my heart for ever, for that very afternoon the beloved little star of my life, putting both her arms about my neck, crimson with confusion, whispered a certain piece of news to me. When I heard it I knelt down at her feet and, weeping with overwhelming emotion, I kissed the knees of her who was not only my wife, but the future mother of my child.

VIII

Two weeks after we left the summer camp we crossed the frontier of Utah, and though the journey was not less difficult, it was at first without mishap. We had to traverse the western side of the Rocky Mountains, which formed there a complete system of ramifications known by the name of the Wasatch Mountains, but an easy passage was made by the two great rivers, the Green and the Grand, whose confluence forms the enormous Colorado, and whose tributaries cut up the mountains in all directions. By these corridors we arrived one day at Lake Utah, where the salt regions begin. We were in the midst of a strange, mournful, monotonous country. The vast prairie valleys, like amphitheatres, circled with roughly hewn rocks, follow one after the other, each like the last in tiring monotony. There is in these deserts and rocks a certain severity, a barren lifelessness, so that the sight of them recalls the deserts of the

Scriptures. The lakes there are salt, with barren and sterile banks.

No trees grow there; the bald ground stretching over huge territories sweats out salt and potassium, or is overgrown with grey herbs, the leaves of which are thick and curly, and, when broken, ooze with a sticky salty sap. Travelling across this country is a dull, depressing business; for whole weeks may pass and the desert has no end, is ever the same, ever displaying the same rocky plateaux. Our strength was again beginning to be exhausted. In the prairies we had been surrounded by a monotony of life; here it was a monotony of death.

Gradually our men sank beneath depression and indifference to everything. We passed through Utah; the same dead lands. We came into Nevada; there was no change. The sun beat down so fiercely that our heads throbbed with pain. The rays sent back by the salt-clad surface struck us full in the eyes. A dust, emanating from some mysterious source, hovered in the air and affected our eyelids. Our beasts bit into the earth with their teeth again and again in their exhaustion, and very often collapsed altogether, struck by the sun as if by a thunderbolt. The majority of our people lived only on the thought that in a week or two we should see the Sierra Nevada over the horizon, and behind them the coveted California. Meanwhile days and weeks passed with increasing hardships. In the space of a week we had to leave three wagons behind for we had not teams enough. Oh! this was indeed a land of misery and lamentation! The desert grew even more lifeless in Nevada, and our state grew worse, for we were attacked by disease.

One day people reported to me that Smith was ill. I went to see what was the matter with him, and to my horror I discovered it was typhus that had cut down the old miner. You cannot go through so many climates with impunity: in spite of short rests, fatigue always asserts itself, and germs thrive on exhaustion and discomfort. Lilian, whom Smith loved like his own child, and had blessed on our wedding day, insisted on nursing him. I, a weak man, trembled for her with all my soul, but I could not forbid her to be a Christian. So she watched over the sick man for entire days and nights, together with Aunt Atkins and Aunt Grosvenor, who followed her example. The second day, however, the old man lost consciousness, and on the eighth day of his malady he died in Lilian's arms. I buried him, shedding sorrowful tears that came from my very heart

over the body of the man who had been not only a fellow worker and my right hand, but like a father to us both. We hoped that after such a painful sacrifice the Lord would have mercy upon us; but it was only the first of a series of disasters, for the same day another miner was stricken with the malady, and then each day somebody laid himself down in his wagon to leave it only for the grave. So we dragged on across the desert, pursued by the epidemic to which new victims succumbed.

Aunt Atkins was the next to catch the disease, but thanks to Lilian's care the crisis passed over happily. In those days I lived in agony all the time, and often when Lilian was nursing her patients, and I was somewhere in the front of the caravan on duty, alone in the darkness, I clutched my head, and like a wretched dog howling for pity, I supplicated God, for I was without the courage to say: "Thy will, not mine, be done." Often at night, even when she was with me, I would wake up suddenly, for it seemed to me that the plague was lifting aside the canvas of my wagon, and looking for Lilian. All the moments I was not at her side, and they were very numerous, turned into a real torture for me, a suffering under which I bent like a tree in the storm. So far, however, Lilian had withstood all the strain and hardships, though even the strongest succumbed. I would watch her as she passed from one wagon to another: she had grown thin and pale, and the signs of her approaching motherhood grew more and more distinct in her face. I had not courage enough to ask her if she were well. I could only take her in my arms and hold her to my heart for a long, long time; whenever I wanted to say something to her a lump rose in my throat and I could not speak.

Yet hope gradually entered my heart. The terrible words of the Bible ceased to ring in my ears: "*Who worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator?*"

We were approaching western Nevada, where, behind a string of dead lakes the salt land and the rocky desert come to an end, and a flatter, greener, richer belt of prairie land begins. When after two days' travelling nobody else fell ill, I thought our misery was about to end. It was indeed time.

Nine people were dead, and six still sick. The panic created by the disease made it necessary to relax discipline. Nearly all our horses had died, and our mules were more like skeletons of animals than real beasts. Of the fifty wagons with which we had left the summer camp, only thirty-two still dragged

across the prairies. What was worse, we were growing short of stores, for nobody cared to go hunting, lest he should fall down outside the camp and remain there without help. For more than a week we lived on black prairie dogs to economize the stores, but the stinking meat nauseated us so much that we ate it with abomination. But even such bad food was not abundant. Beyond the lakes, however, there was more game and more fodder for our beasts.

We came once more upon the Indians, who, against their custom, attacked us by day and in the open prairies and, as they had several fire-arms, they killed four of our people. In the skirmish I received such a heavy blow on the head that in the evening of that day I became unconscious, for I had lost a great deal of blood. Yet I was almost glad that this had befallen me, for now Lilian nursed me instead of the sick men who could have given her typhus. For three days I remained in the wagon, and they were happy days, for I was with her all the time: I could kiss her hands whenever she dressed my wound, and look at her. On the third day I was able to mount on horseback, but my heart sank within me, and I pretended to be sick so that I might stay with her longer.

But only then did I realize what terrible fatigue had worked itself out of my bones as I lay there. For in the first place I had been suffering a very great deal through fear for my wife. That was why I had grown as thin as a skeleton, and just as I had gazed at her, so she in her turn looked at me with fear and anxiety. But once my head stopped swaying from side to side it could not be helped; I had to mount the last wretched horse that was still alive and lead on the caravan, and it was all the more necessary because disquieting signs arose on all sides. The heat grew almost unbearable, and in the air there hovered a sort of unclean fog that was like the smoke of a distant blaze. The horizon became misty and dark; we could not see the sky, and the rays of the sun came to us in an unhealthy red hue. Our beasts were strangely restless, and panted noisily with grinning jaws. We, too, drank fire into our lungs. I thought that this was caused by one of the choking winds from the Gila desert, of which I had heard in the east, but stillness was about us, and no blade of grass stirred in the prairie. The sun set blood-red in the evening, and the nights were oppressive. The sick groaned for water, and the dogs howled, and for nights on end I wandered outside the caravan for miles around to find

out if the prairie were ablaze, but I could discover no fire anywhere.

In the end I put my mind to rest with the thought that it may have been smoke, but from a fire that had died down. I noticed during the day that the hares, antelopes, buffaloes, and even squirrels, were moving hastily eastward as if turning their backs on California, the very country we were straining to reach. Nevertheless, as the atmosphere grew clearer and the heat abated, I was confirmed in the idea that a fire had indeed taken place, but had died out, and that the animals were merely seeking food elsewhere. We had only to reach the place as soon as possible to know whether we could get across the burnt-down space, or whether we should have to go round it. According to my reckoning we had but three hundred English miles to go to reach the Sierra Nevada, that is to say, about twenty more days' travel, so I resolved to go on to my last breath.

Now we journeyed by night for the midday heat completely exhausted our beasts, but between the wagons there was always a little shade in which they could rest in the daytime. During one such night, which I was spending in the wagon with Lilian because through fatigue and my wound I could not remain on horseback, I suddenly heard a strange whirring and creaking of the wheels, as though they had come upon a peculiar sort of ground. At the same time shouts of "Stop, stop!" were heard all along the caravan. I sprang out of the wagon at once, and in the moonlight I saw the drivers bending down over the ground and examining it attentively, and I heard a voice: "Ho, captain! we are moving across coal!" I bent down and touched the ground: we were indeed in a burnt-down prairie.

I immediately stopped the caravan, and we passed the rest of the night on the spot. Next morning when the sun rose, a strange sight met our gaze. As far as eye could see stretched a black and coal-like plain. Not only was every shrub and blade of grass burned down, but the ground was like glass, so that the hoofs of the mules and the wheels of our wagons were reflected in it as in a mirror. We could not see very well how far the fire had raged, for the horizon was shrouded in smoke. Without further hesitation I ordered the caravan to turn south and to keep to the fringe of the fire-track, instead of venturing to cross the embers. I knew from experience what it means to traverse a burnt-down prairie where there is not a blade of grass for the beasts. As the fire was apparently moving north with

the wind, I expected to reach the beginning of the burnt area by going south. My men carried out my orders, of course, but rather unwillingly, for it would mean God knows how long a delay to our journey. During the midday repose the smoke-screen grew thinner, but the heat became so intense that the air seemed to vibrate, and suddenly something happened that could have been held to be a miracle.

The fog and smoke parted all of a sudden as if at a command, and before our eyes there appeared the Sierra Nevada, green and smiling, with gleaming snow on their crests, and so near at hand that we were able to distinguish every peak, their green slopes and their forests. A fresh breeze laden with the resinous scent of the fir-trees seemed to penetrate to us over the burnt waste, and we were filled with the expectation of reaching the flowery feet of the mountains in a few hours. At this vision one and all, exhausted by the terrible desert and its hardships, almost went mad with joy: some fell upon the ground sobbing, others stretched their arms to heaven and burst into laughter: others grew pale and were unable to utter a word. Lillian and I wept tears of joy, mingled for my part with astonishment: for I thought that we were one hundred and fifty miles at least from California. Yet the mountains smiled at us across the embers, and, as if by magic, seemed to draw near, to lean towards us, to invite and lure us on. Although the time destined for rest was not yet over, the men would not hear of remaining longer there. Even the sick, stretching out their yellow hands from under the canvas roofs, entreated us to harness the mules at once, and to move on. We went with vigour and joy, and the creaking of the wheels over the charred ground harmonized with the cracking of the whips and the shouts and songs. To go round the burnt waste was out of the question.

In any case, what was the use of going round it now that California and its lovely snowy mountains were only a few miles away? So we went straight ahead. Meanwhile the smoke-screen again fell upon the bright vista with a strange abruptness. Hours passed, the horizon diminished, and at length the sun set. Night came on: the stars twinkled faintly in the sky, and we were still advancing. The mountains must have been much farther than they seemed.

Towards midnight the mules began to whinny, and refused to budge. An hour later the caravan came to a standstill, for most of the beasts were stretched on the ground. The men did

their best to rouse them, but in vain. Throughout the night nobody closed his eyes. With the first rays of dawn our eyes sought the distance covetously, and found nothing. A mournful black wilderness stretched to the horizon, monotonous, lifeless, and sharply divided from the skyline. There was no trace of the mountains of yesterday.

Everybody was spellbound; and the ill-omened words *Fata Morgana* explained everything to me, and a shiver ran through me to the very marrow of my bones. What was to be done? Were we to go on? What if the burnt waste continued for hundreds of miles? Were we to retreat? Supposing that after a few miles the fire-track were to come to an end? Would our mules be capable of going back the same distance? I had scarcely courage enough to gaze down into the abyss on the edge of which we were all standing. Still I wanted to know what my line of conduct should be, so I mounted my horse and rode forward, and from a hill near by I took in a broader panorama by means of my field-glasses. I saw green stretches far away, but when after an hour's riding I came to the place I found that it was only a pool on the margin of which the fire had not been able altogether to destroy the weeds. The burnt waste reached farther than my naked eye or my field-glasses could penetrate. No, there was nothing to be done. I would have to make the caravan retreat and go round the burnt land. With this end in view I turned my horse back. I expected to find the wagons where I had left them, for I had given them orders to wait for me.

But the men had not obeyed my command. They had roused the mules and the caravan was moving on. To my questions they replied:

"The mountains are there, and there we are going!"

I did not even try to protest, for I saw that no human power could prevent them. I might have gone back with Lillian, but my wagon was no more in existence, and Lillian was travelling with Aunt Atkins.

And so we went on. Night came again, and with it the necessary repose. Above the prairie, turned into coal, the big red moon rose and lit up the waste in its black monotony. Next morning only half the wagons were able to proceed, for the mules of the others were dead. The heat in the daytime was unbearable. The rays absorbed by the coal saturated the air with fire. On the road one of the invalids died in terrible convulsions,

and there was nobody to see to his burial. We left him on the prairie and moved on. The water in the big pool I had discovered the day before momentarily refreshed both men and beasts, but could not restore their strength. The mules had not eaten grass for thirty-six hours, and lived only on straw taken from the wagons, but even this was scarce. So it was that our road was dotted with their corpses, and on the third day there was only one still alive, which I reserved by force for Lilian. The wagons, and in them the implements which were to give us bread in California, were left behind along the eternally accursed wilderness. All save Lilian walked on foot. Soon a new enemy stared us full in the face: starvation. A portion of the food had been left behind in the wagons, and what we were able to carry with us was soon consumed; and no living creature wandered there. I alone of the whole band had a few rusks and a bit of salt meat which I kept for Lilian, and was prepared to tear to pieces any one that might lay hands on them. I, too, ate nothing; and the terrible waste stretched on for ever, and there was no end to the desert.

As if to increase our tortures the mirage reappeared in the prairie at midday. It showed us mountains, forests, and lakes. But the nights were even more horrible. All the rays which the coal had stolen from the sun in the daytime it gave out at night, burning our feet and parching our throats. In the course of such a night one of our men went mad, and sitting down on the ground, started to laugh spasmodically; and this dreadful laughter long pursued us through the darkness. The mule ridden by Lilian fell down dead. The famished men tore it to pieces in the twinkling of an eye, but it was not enough for two hundred people. The fourth day and the fifth passed by. Hunger made the men's faces look bird like, and they watched each other with hatred in their eyes. They knew that I had still some food, but they also knew that to demand a crumb of it from me would mean death, and the instinct of self-preservation still prevailed over hunger. I fed Lilian only at night, so as not to madden them by the sight. She implored me by everything sacred to share with her, but I threatened to shoot myself if she mentioned this again, so she ate, in tears. However, she managed to reserve some crumbs which she distributed to Aunt Atkins and Aunt Grosvenor; and, meantime, the iron hand of hunger gripped my bowels. My wound sent burning pains through my head. For three days I had had nothing in my

mouth save water from the pool. The thought that I was carrying bread and meat, that I had them on me and might eat them, turned into torture. Moreover, I feared that I might go mad from my wound, and devour them.

"O Lord," I prayed in my soul, "Thou wilt not so abandon me. Thou wilt not turn me into a beast who could take what may keep her alive."

But no mercy came down upon me in those days. On the sixth day I noticed fiery spots on Lilian's face. Her hands were burning, and she panted heavily when she walked. Suddenly she looked at me with glazed eyes, and spoke quickly, as if making haste lest she should lose consciousness.

"Ralph, leave me here. Save yourself. There is no help for me."

I ground my teeth, for I wanted to howl and blaspheme, and without a word I took her up in my arms. Zigzags of fire flashed in my eyes and composed the words: *Who worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator!* Then I felt released like a bow tautly strung, and looking into the merciless sky I answered with all my rebellious soul:

"I!"

Meantime I carried this precious burden of mine and beloved martyr to my Golgotha. I know not whence came my strength. I became indifferent to hunger, heat, and fatigue. I saw nothing before me, neither men nor the burnt-down prairie: I saw only her. When night came she grew worse. She began to wander in her mind, moaning softly at intervals: "Ralph, get me a drink!" but I, agony of agonies! had only some salt meat and rusks! In utter despair I cut my hand with my knife, and wet her lips with my blood: but she suddenly became conscious, shrieked, and then fell into a long swoon, from which I thought she would never wake. When she came to herself she tried to speak, but fever confused her thoughts, and she only moaned softly:

"Don't be angry with me, Ralph. I am your wife."

I carried her on in silence, for I was growing numb with pain. The seventh day set in. The Sierra Nevada loomed on the horizon at last, but meantime at sunset the very light of my life began also to set. When the agony began I laid her down on the burnt ground, and fell on my knees beside her. Her eyes were wide open, staring fixedly at me. For a moment a gleam of consciousness crept into them, and she whispered:

"My dear! My husband!" Then a shiver ran through her frame, a look of fear appeared on her face; and she was dead.

I tore the bandages from my head, fainted, and remembered no more. As if in a dream, I beheld people about me who removed my rifle from me. Then they seemed to dig a grave; and then madness and darkness engulfed me, and in them were the words of fire: *Who worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator?*

A month later I awoke in California at the home of Moszyński, the squatter. Having recovered a little, I made for Nevada. The prairie was clad in tall grass again, and it was luxuriantly green, so that I could not discover the place of her grave, and to this day I know not where her sacred remains lie buried. What had I done to the Lord to merit that He should avert His face from me and forget me in the desert? That I know not either. If I could shed a tear from time to time over her grave my life would be easier to bear. I am wont to go every year to Nevada to search in vain. Since those terrible moments, years have passed by. My miserable lips have murmured many a time, "Thy will be done." Still I am not happy in this world without her; I live and walk among men, sometimes I laugh; but the lonely old heart weeps and loves and yearns and remembers.

I am an old man, and soon I shall undertake another journey, but this time into eternity. So I ask God for this much, that I may find my love in the pines of Heaven, never to part again.

THE LIGHTHOUSE-KEEPER¹

Translated by MONICA M. GARDNER

I

It so happened that the lighthouse-keeper in Aspinwall, not far from Panama, disappeared without leaving a trace. As this occurred during a storm it was supposed that the unfortunate man must have gone too near the edge of the island rock on which the lighthouse stood, and been washed away by a wave. This was the more probable, because his boat was not found the next day in its rocky niche. The post of lighthouse-keeper therefore fell vacant; but it had to be filled as soon as possible, because the lighthouse is of no small importance, both for the local shipping and for the vessels going from New York to Panama. The Mosquito Gulf abounds in sandbanks and reefs, through which navigation is difficult even in the day, but at night, especially in the fogs that often come up on those waters, heated through with the tropical sun, almost impossible. At such times the light of the lantern is the only guide for the numerous ships. The task of finding a new lighthouse-keeper devolved on the Consul of the United States who lived in Panama, and it was a task of no small difficulty; first, because it was absolutely necessary to find a successor to the post within twelve hours; secondly, because this successor had to be trustworthy beyond the average, and it was therefore impossible to accept just the first who came; and lastly, because there was generally a dearth of candidates for the post. Life in a lighthouse tower is an extraordinarily hard one, and does not at all appeal to the natives of the south, lazy lovers of a free vagrant existence. The lighthouse-keeper is almost a prisoner. With the exception of Sundays he cannot stir from his island rock. A boat from Aspinwall brings him a stock of provisions and fresh water once a day; the men who bring these depart immediately; and in

¹ This story is founded on a real occurrence, of which J. Horain wrote in one of his letters from America.—AUTHOR.

the whole of the little island that measures an acre, there is not one other human being. The lighthouse-keeper lives in the lighthouse, and keeps it in order. In the day he gives signals by hanging out different coloured flags, according to the indications of the barometer, and in the evening he lights the lantern. That would be no great labour, if it were not that to get from the bottom to the lantern on the top of the tower he has to mount more than four hundred winding and exceedingly steep steps; yet the lighthouse-keeper must sometimes make that journey several times a day. To sum up, it is a claustal life, and even more than claustal, for it is a hermit's life. It is, therefore, not surprising that Mr Isaac Folcombridge was in great perplexity where to find a permanent successor to the late lighthouse-keeper; and his joy may be imagined when that successor most unexpectedly appeared that very same day. He was a man already old, seventy years or more, but hale, erect, with the movements and bearing of a soldier. His hair was quite white; his complexion was as sunburnt as a creole's, but judging from his blue eyes he belonged to no southern race. His face had an oppressed and sad, but honest, expression. Folcombridge took a fancy to him at the first glance. There was nothing left to do but to examine him, which resulted in the following conversation:

"Where do you come from?"

"I am a Pole."

"What have you been doing up till now?"

"I've led a roving life."

"A lighthouse-keeper must be fond of staying in one place."

"I need rest."

"Have you ever been in any public service? Have you got any testimonials of good official service?"

The old man drew out from his breast-pocket a discoloured silk rag, resembling a strip of an old flag, unrolled it, and said:

"Here are my testimonials. I won this cross in '30. This second one is Spanish from the Carlist war, the third the French Legion's; the fourth I got in Hungary. After that I fought in the States against the South, but there they don't give crosses. But here's a paper."

Folcombridge took the paper and began reading.

"H'm! Skawiński! That's your name? H'm! . . . Two flags captured by your own hand in a bayonet charge. You've been a plucky soldier."

"I can be a good lighthouse-keeper too."

"You'll have to go up the tower over there several times a day. Are your legs strong?"

"I've crossed the *plains* on foot."

(They call the immense prairies between New York and California *plains*.)

"All right! Do you know anything about life at sea?"

"I served three years on a whaler."

"You've tried different occupations?"

"It's because I never could find peace anywhere."

"Why?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"Fate."

"You look to me too old for a lighthouse-keeper."

"Sir!" the candidate burst out in agitated tones. "I am very tired and battered about. You see I've gone through a lot. This post is one of those I've most longed to get. I'm old. I need rest. I need to be able to say to myself: You are going to settle down here now, you're in port. Oh, sir! this depends only on you. A post like this mayn't fall vacant again. It was lucky that I was in Panama. . . . I implore you. . . . So help me God, I'm like a ship which, if it doesn't get into port, will founder. . . . If you want to make an old man happy . . . I swear that I'm an honest man, but . . . I've had enough of all that wandering."

The old man's eyes were so beseeching that Folcombridge, who was kind and simple of heart, felt touched.

"Well!" he said. "I accept you. You are the lighthouse-keeper."

The old man's face lit up with unspeakable joy.

"Thank you."

"Can you go to the tower to-day?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, then, good-bye. Just one word: for the slightest negligence in your duty you'll be dismissed."

"All right."

That same evening, when the sun had sunk to the other side of the isthmus and after a gorgeous day night without twilight had set in, the new lighthouse-keeper was evidently at his post, for the lantern cast as usual its sheaves of brilliant light over the water. The night was absolutely calm, still, a true tropical night, saturated with a bright mist that formed a great rainbow-

coloured ring with faint melting edges round the moon. Only the sea was restless, because the tide was coming in. Skawiński, looking from below like a little black dot, stood on the balcony close to the mighty lantern. He tried to collect his thoughts and to take in his new position. But his mind was too oppressed to be able to work properly. He felt somewhat as a hunted beast feels when it at last finds shelter in an inaccessible rock or cave. The time for rest had come for him at last. A feeling of security filled his soul with speechless delight. Yes, from this rock he could afford to laugh at his old wanderings, his old misfortunes, and failures. He was, in fact, like a ship whose masts had been smashed by the tempest, its ropes, its sails rent, which the storm had sent hurtling from the clouds to the bottom of the sea, on which the waves had beaten, the foam spat—and yet which had come into port. Memories of that storm now passed swiftly through his mind in contrast with the tranquil future which was now to begin. He had told Folcombridge a part of his strange vicissitudes, but he had not mentioned thousands of other adventures. His misfortune had been that as often as he pitched his tent and lit the fire on his hearth to settle down for good, the wind tore away the tent pegs, scattered the ashes of his fire, and brought himself to ruin. Gazing now from the balcony of the tower on the shining waves he recalled all that he had passed through. He had fought in the four quarters of the globe—and during his wanderings had tried nearly every calling. Hardworking and honest, he had often made a little money, and in spite of all his precautions and the greatest prudence had always lost it. He had been a gold-digger in Australia, searched for diamonds in Africa, had been a Government hunter in the East Indies. When at one time he had started a farm in California a drought ruined him. He had tried trading with the savage races inhabiting the interior of Brazil; his raft capsized on the Amazon, and he himself, unarmed and nearly naked, had taken refuge in the forests for several weeks, eating wild fruit, each moment exposed to death from the jaws of beasts of prey. He had opened a blacksmith's forge in Helena, in Arkansas, and it was burnt to the ground in a great fire that raged through all the town. Next, he fell into the hands of Indians in the Rocky Mountains, and it was only by a miracle that Canadian hunters rescued him. He served as a sailor on a vessel plying between Bahia and Bordeaux, afterwards as a harpooner on a whaler; both ships foundered.

He had a cigar factory in Havana, and was robbed by his partner while he was lying sick of dysentery. Finally, he went to Aspinwall; and here he had surely come to the end of his misfortunes. For what more could overtake him on this island rock? Neither water nor fire nor man. As a matter of fact, Skawiński had experienced little harm from mankind. He had more often met good men than bad.

Yet it seemed as though all four elements persecuted him. Those who knew him said that luck was against him, and so explained it. He himself at last became a little bit of a monomaniac upon the subject. He believed that some powerful and avenging hand was pursuing him everywhere, by land and water. He disliked speaking about it; but sometimes, when asked whose hand it was, he would point mysteriously to the Polar Star, and say that it came from there. As a matter of fact his misadventures were so persistent that it was curious, and could easily have made any one get that idea into his head, especially the man who experienced them. Yet he had the patience of an Indian, and the great and quiet resisting power that springs from rectitude of soul. During his service in Hungary he received several bayonet thrusts because he refused to seize the strap shown him as his means of safety and cry: "I surrender!" Similarly he never gave in under his troubles. He crawled upwards as laboriously as an ant. Thrust down a hundred times, for the hundred and first time he would calmly begin his journey over again. In his way he was something quite extraordinary. That old soldier, scorched in God knows what fires, steeled in adversity, beaten and moulded, had the heart of a child. When there was an epidemic in Cuba he caught it because he gave away all his quinine, of which he had a large stock, without keeping so much as a grain for himself.

There was also this curious thing about him, that after so many disillusiones he was always full of confidence, and never lost hope that all would still be well. In the winter he was always filled with fresh life, and foresaw great events. He waited for them impatiently, and for many a year lived on the thought of them. But one after the other the winters passed away, and all that Skawiński won by waiting was that his hair turned white. Finally, he grew old. He began to lose his energy. His patience began ever more to resemble resignation. His old tranquillity changed into a tendency to sensibility, and that hardened soldier was beginning to degenerate into a fretful

child, liable to melt into tears at the slightest pretext. Besides which, from time to time, he was gripped by a terrible homesickness, which the most trifling circumstance would rouse: the sight of swallows, of grey birds resembling sparrows, snow on the mountains, or some tune like one he had once heard. At last he was overpowered by one thought only: the thought of rest. It took complete possession of the old man, and absorbed all other desires and hopes. The eternal wanderer could now picture in his dreams nothing more desirable, nothing more precious than some quiet corner where he might rest and tranquilly await the end. Perhaps it was just because some curious freak of fate had cast him forth by land and sea, with scarcely breathing space, that he now imagined the greatest happiness a man could have would simply be not to wander. That modest happiness was now indeed his by rights, but by now he was so used to disappointment that he thought of it as men are wont to dream of something unattainable. He dared not expect it. But now, suddenly, in the course of twelve hours, he had obtained a post that seemed chosen out of all others in the world for him. Hence, it was not surprising that after he had lit his lantern in the evening he was as though stunned; that he asked himself if this were true, and he dared not answer, Yes. Yet at the same time reality spoke to him with invincible proofs; therefore one hour followed after another, and he was still on the balcony. He gazed; he drank his fill; he was convinced. He might have been seeing the sea for the first time in his life. The lens of the lantern flung into the darkness a mighty cone of light, beyond which the old man's eyes were lost in a distance, that was pitch black, mysterious, and terrible. Yet that distance seemed to be running towards the light. Long, jagged waves rolled out from the darkness and, roaring, reached as far as the foot of the little island, and then their foaming manes were visible, glittering, rose coloured, in the light of the lantern. The tide was fast coming in and pouring over the sandbanks. The mysterious language of the ocean was approaching from the deep, ever stronger, ever louder; at times like the thunder of cannon, then as the sighing of mighty forests, again like a far-off confused clamour of human voices. At moments, a hush. Then a few great sighs beat on the old man's ear, then, sobbing—and again, sullen explosions. At last the wind blew the mist asunder, but drove before it the black, ragged clouds which were veiling the moon. It began to blow rougher

from the west. The billows leapt with fury on the lighthouse rock, licking the masonry supports with foam. A storm growled in the distance. On the dark heaving waste a few little green lamps flashed, hanging on the masts of ships. These little green dots now rose, now sank, now wavered to the right, now to the left. Skawiński went down into his room. The storm had begun to howl. Out there men on those ships were battling with the night, with the dark, with the waves; but inside the room it was quiet and still. Even the echoes of the storm but faintly penetrated the thick walls, and there was only the rhythmic tick-tack of the clock that seemed to rock the tired old man to sleep.

II

HOURS, days, and weeks began to slip away. Sailors say that sometimes when the sea is very rough something calls them by their name out of the night and darkness. If the infinite ocean can thus call, then it may be that when a man grows old another infinitude, darker still, and more mysterious, calls him too; and the more wearied he is with life the sweeter to him is that call. But if he would hear it there must be silence. Besides which, old age is fain to withdraw into solitude as though in anticipation of the grave. The lighthouse was a sort of grave to Skawiński. There is nothing more monotonous than that life in the tower. If young men consent to undertake it, after a given time they resign the post. Therefore a lighthouse-keeper is usually a man no longer young, gloomy by nature, and sufficient to himself. When he chances to leave his lighthouse and goes among men, he walks in their midst like a man woken out of a deep sleep. In the tower all those small trifles which ordinary life trains us to consider important are lacking. Everything with which the lighthouse-keeper comes into contact is huge, without concrete or definite form. The sky is one element, water the other; and between those immensities one solitary human soul. It is a life in which a man's thoughts are one continual dream, and nothing rouses the lighthouse-keeper from this dream, not even his tasks. One day is as like another day as two beads on a rosary, and the changes in the weather are, in fact, the only variety. Yet Skawiński was happier than he had ever been in his life before. He rose at daybreak, breakfasted, cleaned the lens of the lantern, and then sitting in the balcony gazed far out to sea; and his eyes could never have their fill of the pictures

that he saw before him. On the immense background of turquoise blue there was usually a flock of swelling sails, shining so brilliantly in the rays of the sun that he had to close his eyes against the excessive glare. Sometimes the ships, taking advantage of the eastern equatorial winds, went by in a long line one behind the other like a string of gulls or albatrosses. The red buoys pointing out the road rocked on the waves with a light, gentle motion. Every day at midday a huge greyish pennon of smoke appeared among the sails. It was the steamer from New York bringing passengers and cargo to Aspinwall, drawing behind it a long frothing trail of foam. From the other side of the balcony Skawiński saw as if on the palm of his hand Aspinwall and its busy harbour, inside the latter a forest of masts, ships, and boats, and a little farther off the white houses and spires of the town. From the height of the tower the little houses looked like gulls' nests, the boats like black beetles, and the human beings moving about on the white stone breakwater like minute specks. In the morning the light easterly breeze carried with it the confused clamour of human life, dominated by the whistles of steamboats. Midday brought the hour of the siesta. The activity in the harbour stopped. The gulls hid themselves in the crevices of the rocks, the waves died down and seemed asleep; and then the moment of silence, unbroken by a single sound, came down on land and sea and lighthouse. The yellow sands, from which the waves had rolled back, glistened like spots of gold on the waste of water; the pillar of the tower was cut out sharply against the blue sky. Streams of sunlight flowed from the sky on the water, on the sands, and on the rocks. At such times a sort of sweet faintness swept over the old man. He felt that this rest which he was enjoying was an exquisite thing, and when he told himself that it would last, he wanted nothing more. Skawiński was intoxicated with his own good fortune, but because a man soon grows used to his better lot in life he gradually acquired faith and confidence; for he reflected that if men build homes for invalids, then why should not God give shelter to His invalids when the end is nearly here? Time passed on and confirmed him in this conviction. The old man lived in the company of the tower, the lantern, the rock, the sandbanks, and solitude. He also made friends with the gulls who laid their eggs in the rocky clefts, and in the evening held their parliaments on the roof of the lighthouse. Skawiński usually threw them the remains of his food; but they soon grew

so used to him that when he did this he was surrounded by a perfect storm of white wings; the old man went about among the birds like a shepherd among his sheep. At low tide he went out on the low-lying sandbanks on which he gathered appetising shellfish and beautiful pearl-mussel shells which the retreating waves had washed up on the sand. At night, by the light of the moon and the lantern, he went after fish with which the crevices of the rocks swarmed. He ended by falling in love with his rock and his treeless island, covered with sturdy little plants exuding a sticky resin, the only thing that grew there. The distant views made up to him for the barrenness of the island. In the afternoon, when the atmosphere became very clear, the whole of the isthmus could be seen, covered as far as the Pacific with the most luxuriant vegetation. It seemed at such times to Skawinski as though he were looking at one gigantic garden. Clusters of coco-nut trees and mighty bananas were grouped like superb, tufted bouquets close behind the houses of Aspinwall. Farther away, between Aspinwall and Panama, an immense forest was to be seen, above which a reddish vapour rising from its exhalations always hung after sunrise and towards nightfall; a true tropical forest, soaked in its lower depths with stagnant water, entangled with lianas, murmuring like one wave of gigantic orchids, palms, milk-trees, iron-trees, and gum-trees.

Through his official telescope the old man could see not only the trees, not only the widespreading leaves of the bananas, but even troops of monkeys, of great marabouts, and flocks of parrots flying like a rainbow cloud over the forest. Skawinski knew that sort of forest at close quarters, because after he had been wrecked on the Amazon he had wandered for weeks under the same sort of trees and among the same sort of jungles. He had seen how under their lovely smiling surface danger and death lay hidden. In the nights he had spent within them he had heard close at hand the menacing voices of monkeys and the roar of jaguars; he had seen huge snakes swaying like lianas on trees; he knew those sluggish forest ponds overflowing with cramp-fish and swarming with crocodiles. He knew what dread a man lives under in those unfathomable jungles where a single leaf is ten times his size, which swarm with bloodthirsty mosquitoes, tree leeches, and gigantic poisonous spiders. He knew all this for himself. He himself had experienced it. He had won through it all himself. Therefore it was all the greater delight to him to look out from his height at those *matos*, to admire their

beauty, and yet to be shielded from their treachery. His tower guarded him against all evil. He only indeed left it at intervals, on Sunday mornings. He then put on his long blue official coat with silver buttons, hung his crosses on his breast; and he carried his milk-white head with a certain pride when, as he came out of church, he heard the crookes say to one another: "We 've got a proper lighthouse-keeper!" "And not a heretic, though he's a Yankee!" But he returned to the island immediately after Mass, and was glad to return, for he still felt some lurking distrust of the mainland. On Sundays, too, he would read a Spanish newspaper that he bought in the town, or the *New York Herald*, borrowed from Fokombridge, searching through them for their scanty news of Europe. Poor old heart! In that watchtower and in another hemisphere it still beat for his country. Sometimes, also, when the boat that daily brought him his provisions and water landed at the island, he came down from the tower for a chat with the watchman, Johns. But he was noticeably growing more of a recluse. He ceased going to the town, reading newspapers, or coming down for Johns's political discussions. Whole weeks passed without his seeing any one or any one seeing him. The only sign that the old man was alive was the disappearance of the provisions left on the bank, and the light of the lantern that was lit each evening as regularly as the sun in those parts of the world rises out of the water. This was caused not by homesickness, but by the fact that homesickness had passed into resignation. The whole world now began and ended for the old man on his little island. He lived upon the thought that he would leave his island no more until his death, and he frankly forgot that there was anything left beyond it. Moreover he was becoming a mystic. His gentle blue eyes began to be the eyes of a child, eternally gazing, as though fastened on something far away. In his continual isolation and in surroundings that were of no ordinary simplicity and grandeur the old man began to lose the consciousness of his own identity; he was ceasing to exist as a separate personality, and was becoming ever more one with that which surrounded him. He did not reason about it, he only instinctively felt it; but in the end it seemed to him that the sky, the water, his rock, the tower, and the golden sandbanks, and the swelling sails and the gulls, the incoming and outgoing tides, were all one great harmony and one mighty, mysterious soul; and he was submerged in that mystery, and

felt the presence of that soul which was living and at rest. He sank into it, he was cradled by it, memory fled; and in that captivity of his own separate existence, in that half-consciousness, half-sleep, he found a peace so great that it almost resembled death.

III

BUT the awakening came.

One day after the boat had brought water and a stock of provisions, Skawiński, coming down an hour later from the tower, saw that besides the ordinary load there was another packet. On the outer cover of the packet there were United States postage stamps, and the address, "Skawiński Esq.," written clearly on the rough canvas. His curiosity greatly excited, the old man cut through the canvas and saw books. He took one in his hand, looked, and laid it down again. Then his hands began trembling violently. He shaded his eyes, as though he could not trust them; he thought he was dreaming; the book was Polish. What could this mean? Who could have sent the book to him? At the moment he had forgotten that quite at the beginning of his career in the lighthouse he had read one day in a *Herald*, borrowed from the consul, of the foundation of a Polish Society in New York, and that he had immediately sent the society half of his monthly salary, for which as a matter of fact he had no use in the tower. The society had sent him the books as a token of gratitude. They had come in a natural way, but at the first moment the old man could not grasp this idea. Polish books in Aspinwall, in his tower, in his solitude, were to his mind something extraordinary, like a breath of old days; a sort of miracle. Then it seemed to him as to those sailors in the night, that something had called him by his name in a voice greatly loved, but wellnigh forgotten. He sat for a minute with closed eyes, and he was almost certain that when he opened them the dream would vanish. No! The packet on which the afternoon rays of the sun were shining lay distinctly before him, cut open, and on it the open book. When the old man once more stretched out his hand for it he heard in the stillness the beating of his own heart. He looked. It was poetry. The title was written on the cover in large letters, and below was the name of the author. That name was not a stranger to Skawiński. He knew that it belonged to a great poet, whose works he had even read after the year '30 in

Paris.¹ Later, when he was fighting in Algeria and Spain, he heard from compatriots of the ever increasing fame of the great prophet-poet, but at that time he was so familiar with a gun that he never took a book in his hand. In the year '49 he went to America, and in the adventurous life he led he scarcely ever came across any Pole, and never a Polish book. So it was with all the greater haste and with the more wildly palpitating heart that he turned the title-page. Then it seemed to him that something sacred was beginning to take place on his lonely rock. It was indeed a moment of great peace and stillness. The clocks of Aspinwall had struck five o'clock in the afternoon. Not a single cloud cast a shadow over the bright sky, only a few gulls floated in its blue depths. The ocean was rocked to sleep. The quiet waves near the shore scarcely so much as rippled, as they melted gently away on the sands. The white houses of Aspinwall and the clovelly groups of palms smiled in the distance. There was indeed something sacred, and quiet and solemn. Suddenly in the midst of that peace of Nature the trembling voice of the old man rang out, he was reading aloud to make what he read easier for him to understand:

Lithuania, my country, thou art like health
How much to prize thee can only be told
By him who hath lost thee all thy beauty to-day
I see, and I sing, for I pine after thee²

Skawiński's voice failed. The letters began to swim before his eyes. Something snapped in his breast, and ran like a wave from his heart higher and higher, stifling his voice, clutching his throat. . . . A moment longer he mastered himself, and read on:

Holy Virgin, who dost guard Czenstochowa bright,³
And shinest over the Ostrian Gate!⁴ Thou who the castled rock

¹ Adam Mickiewicz, the greatest of Polish poets (1798-1855), who, after the Polish Rising of 1830, together with him herds of other Poles, lived in exile in Paris.—M. M. G.

² The opening invocation of Mickiewicz's most famous poem, *Tadeusz*. This poem is a song of the manners of the Lithuania of the poet's boyhood, filled with exquisite word paintings of the scenery and slays of that country, and set on the background of a passionate patriotism. It culminates in the march of the Polish Legions through Lithuania in Napoleon's Russian campaign of 1812, from which the Poles hoped for the restoration of their nation.—M. M. G.

³ The shrine of the Blessed Virgin, honoured above all others in Poland, that is hallowed by the most sacred of national traditions. See the allusion to Our Lady of Poland in *Hania* and the footnote accompanying it. —M. M. G.

⁴ The shrine of the Blessed Virgin in Wilno, where Mickiewicz studied as a university student.—M. M. G.

Of NowogródJek,¹ and its faithful people shelterest!
As by a miracle thou grantedst me, a child, return to health,
When by my weeping mother 'neath thy protection placed,
My dying eyes I opened, and to thy shrine on foot
I went straightway to thank God for my restored life;
So thou shalt grant us to return by a miracle to our land.

The rising wave burst the barrier of will. The old man uttered a loud cry, and flung himself on the ground; his milk-white hair mingled with the sand of the seashore. Forty years had passed by since he had seen his country, and God knows how many since he had heard his native language; yet here at this actual moment that language had come to him of its own accord; it had crossed the ocean, and found the lonely recluse in the other hemisphere; that language so beloved, so dear, so beautiful! In the sobbing which shook him there was no grief, but only a suddenly awakened, infinite love, beside which all else was as naught. That passionate weeping was simply his entreaty for forgiveness from that loved, distant country, because he had grown so old, lived so intimately with a solitary rock, and forgotten so much, that even the homesickness of his soul had begun to wear away. And now he had "returned by a miracle"; and his heart was torn within him. The moments passed one after the other. He still lay there. The gulls flew over the lighthouse, crying intermittently, as if uneasy about their old friend. It was near the hour when he used to feed them with the remains of his provisions, so a few of them flew down to him from the top of the lighthouse. Then more of them kept coming, and began gently pecking him, and fluttering over his head. The rustle of the wings roused him. Having wept his fill, he now felt full of peace and radiant joy; his eyes shone as if they were inspired. Unconsciously he gave away the whole of his provisions to the birds, who swooped upon them, screeching; and he himself took up the book again. The sun had by now passed over the gardens and the virgin forest of Panama, and was slowly sinking beyond the isthmus, towards the other ocean, but the Atlantic was still all glowing. The sky was quite light, so he read on:

Till then carry my yearning soul
Unto those wooded hills, those meadows green.

¹ The town in Lithuania where Mickiewicz lived when a boy.—M. M. G.

Twilight had blotted out the letters on the white page; a twilight as short as the twinkling of an eye. The old man leant his head on the rock and closed his eyes. And then, "She who guards bright Czenstochowa" took to herself his soul, and bore it "to those fields painted with many-coloured grains." Long red and golden trails were still burning in the sky, and on those shafts of light he fled to the beloved land. The pine woods roared in his ears, his native rivers gurgled. He saw it all as it used to be. It all asked him: "Do you remember?" Did he remember! Besides, he saw;—wide fields, green unploughed strips dividing them, meadows, woods, and hamlets. By now it was night. At that hour his lantern was used to shine over the darkness of the sea: but he was now in his native village. His old head was bowed on his breast, and he was dreaming. Scenes passed one another before his eyes swiftly and a trifle confused. He did not see the house where he had been born because war had wiped it out; he did not see his father or mother, because they had died when he was a child; but he saw the village as though he had left it yesterday; the row of cottages with faint lights in their windows, the dikes, the mill, the two ponds lying over against each other, and ringing all night with choirs of frogs. Once, in that village of his, he was on sentry duty at night. That past now suddenly rose before him in a series of visions. He is again a lancer on guard. The tavern is looking out from the distance with streaming eyes, and ringing and singing and roaring in the stillness of the night with the stamping of feet, with the voices of the fiddles and double-basses. "U—ha! U ha!" The lancers are dancing till their ironshod heels send out sparks, while he is bored out there alone on his horse. The hours drag on slowly. At last the lights go out. Now as far as the eye can see is mist, impenetrable mist. It must be the damp rising from the meadows, and folding the whole world in a grey-white cloud. You would think it was the ocean: but it is the meadows that are there. Wait a little, and you will hear the corncrake calling in the darkness and bitterns booming in the reeds. The night is calm and cool, a real Polish night. In the distance the pine forest murmurs without wind—like the waves of the sea. Soon the dawn will whiten the east; yes, the cocks are crowing already behind the hedges. Each takes up the other's voice, one after the other from cottage to cottage; suddenly the cranes, too, cry from high up in the sky. A feeling of life and health sweeps over the lancer. They were

saying something over yonder about to-morrow's battle. Ha! He 'll be going too like the others with a shout and fluttering of flags. His young blood plays like a trumpet, although the night breeze has chilled it. But now it is dawn, dawn! The night is waning. The forests, the thickets, the row of cottages, the mill, the poplars, steal out of the shadows. The well-sticks creak like the tin flag on the tower. That dear country, beautiful in the rosy light of dawn! Oh, beloved, beloved land!

Hush! The watchful sentry hears footsteps approaching. They must be coming to relieve the guard.

Suddenly a voice rang out over Skawiński's head.

"Hi, old chap! Get up. What's the matter with you?"

The old man opened his eyes, and gazed bewildered at the man standing before him. Remnants of the visions of his dreams struggled in his brain with reality. Finally, the visions grew faint and vanished. Johns, the harbour watchman, was standing in front of him.

"What's all this?" Johns asked. "Are you sick?"

"No."

"You didn't light the lantern. You are going to be dismissed from the service. A boat from San Geromo has been wrecked on a sand-reef. Luckily no one was drowned. If they had been you'd have been tried for it. Get into the boat with me. You'll hear the rest in the Consulate."

The old man turned pale. Indeed, he had not lit the lantern that night.

A few days later Skawinski might have been seen on the deck of a vessel going from Aspinwall to New York. The poor old man had lost his post. New ways of a wanderer's existence had opened again before him. Again the wind had blown the leaf away to cast it forth by land and sea, to make sport of it at its will. During those few days the old man had grown very shrunken and bent: only his eyes shone. But in his breast he carried into the new roads of his life his book, which from time to time his hand grasped as though fearful lest that too should be taken from him.

BARTEK THE CONQUEROR

Translated by ELSE BENECKE

I

My hero's name was Bartek Slowik¹; but owing to his habit of staring when spoken to, the neighbours called him "Bartek Goggle-Eyes." Indeed, he had little in common with nightingales, and his intellectual qualities and truly childish *naïveté* won him the further nickname of "Bartek the Blockhead." The last was the most popular, in fact, the only one handed down to history, though Bartek bore yet a fourth—an official—name. Since the Polish words "man" and "nightingale"² present no difference to a German ear, and the Germans love to translate barbarian proper names into a more cultured language in the cause of civilization, the following conversation took place when he was being entered as a recruit.

"What is your name?" the officer asked Bartek.

"Slowik."

"Szloik.³ *Ach, ja, gut*"

And the officer wrote down "Man."

Bartek came from the village of Pognenbin, a name given to a great many villages in the province of Poznań and in other parts of Poland. First of all there was he himself, not to mention his land, his cottage and two cows, his own piebald horse, and his wife, Magda. Thanks to this combination of circumstances he was able to live comfortably, and according to the maxim contained in the verse:

To him whom God would bless He gives, of course,
A wife called Magda and a piebald horse.

In fact, all his life he had taken whatever Providence sent without troubling about it. But just now Providence had

¹ Nightingale.—TRANSLATOR.

² "Człowiek" and "slowik."—TRANSLATOR.

³ "Człowiek" (man).—TRANSLATOR.

ordained war, and Bartek was not a little upset at this. For news had come that the reserves would be called up, and that it would be necessary to leave his cottage and land, and entrust it all to his wife's care. People at Pognenbin were poor enough already. Bartek usually worked at the factory in the winter and helped his household on in this way; but what would happen now? Who could know when the war with the French would end? Magda, when she had read through the papers, began to swear:

"May they be damned and die themselves! May they be blinded!—Though you are a fool—yet I am sorry for you. The French give no quarter; they will chop off your head, I dare say."

Bartek felt that his wife spoke the truth. He feared the French like fire, and was sorry for himself on that account. What had the French done to him? What was he going after there,—why was he going to that horrible strange land where not a single friendly soul was to be found? He knew what life at Pognenbin was like—well, it was neither easy nor difficult, but just as it was. But now he was being told to go away, although he knew that it was better to be here than anywhere else. Still, there was no help for it;—such is fate. Bartek embraced his wife, and the ten-year-old Franek; spat, crossed himself, and went out of the cottage, Magda following him. They did not take very tender leave of one another. They both sobbed, he repeating, "Come, come, hush!" and went out into the road. There they realized that the same thing which had happened to them had happened to all Pognenbin, for the whole village was astir, and the road was obstructed by traffic. As they walked to the station, women, children, old men, and dogs followed them. Every one's heart was heavy; but a few smoked their pipes with an air of indifference, and some were already intoxicated. Others were singing with hoarse voices:

Skrzynecki ¹ died, alas!
No more his voice is heard;
His hand, bedecked with rings,
No more shall wield the sword,

while one or two of the Germans from Pognenbin sang *Wacht am Rhein* out of sheer fright. All that motley and many-

¹ A popular song. Skrzynecki was a well-known leader in the Polish Revolution of 1830.—TRANSLATOR.

coloured crowd—including policemen with glittering bayonets—moved in file towards the end of the village with shouts, bustle, and confusion. Women clung to their “warriors’” necks and wept; one old woman showed her yellow teeth and waved her arms in the air; another cried: “May the Lord remember our tears!” There were cries of: “Franek! Kasko! Józek! good-bye!” Dogs barked, the church bell rang, the priest even said the prayers for the dying, since not one of those now going to the station would return. The war had claimed them all, but the war would not give them back. The plough would grow rusty in the field, for Poggenbin had declared war against the French. Poggenbin could not acquiesce in the supremacy of Napoleon III, and took to heart the question of the Spanish succession. The last sounds of the bell hovered over the crowd, which was already falling out of line. Heads were bared as they passed the shrine. The light dust rose up from the road, for the day was dry and fine. Along both sides of the road the ripening corn, heavy in the ear, rustled and bowed in the gentle gusts of wind. The larks were twittering in the blue sky, and each warbled as if fearing he might be forgotten.

At the station there was a still greater crowd, and more noise and confusion. Here were men called in from Krzywda Górna, Krzywda Dolna, from Wywłaszczyńce, from Niedola, and Mizerów. The station walls were covered with proclamations in which war was declared in the Name of God and the Fatherland: the *Landwehr* was setting forth to defend menaced parents, wives and children, cottages and fields. It was evident that the French bore a special grudge against Poggenbin, Krzywda Górna, Krzywda Dolna, Wywłaszczyńce, Niedola, and Mizerów. Such, at least, was the impression produced on those who read the placards. Fresh crowds were continually assembling in front of the station. In the waiting-room the smoke from the men’s pipes filled the air, and hid the placards. It was difficult to make oneself understood in the noise, for every one was running, shouting, and screaming. On the platform orders were given in German. They sounded strangely brief, harsh, and decisive.

The bell rang. The powerful breath of the engine was heard in the distance coming nearer—growing more distinct. With it the war itself seemed to be coming nearer.

A second bell—and a shudder ran through every heart. A woman began to scream, “Jadom, Jadom!” She was

evidently calling to her Adam, but the other women took up the word and cried, "Jadą"¹ A shrill voice among them added: "The French are coming!" and in the twinkling of an eye a panic seized not only the women, but also the future heroes of Sedan. The crowd swerved. At that moment the train entered the station. Caps and uniforms were to be seen at all the windows. Soldiers seemed to swarm like ants. Dark, oblong bodies of cannon showed grimly on some of the trucks, on others there was a forest of bayonets. The soldiers had, apparently, been ordered to sing, for the whole train shook with their strong masculine voices. Strength and power seemed in some way to issue from that train, the end of which was not even in sight.

The reservists on the platform began to fall in, but any one who could lingered in taking leave. Bartek swung his arms as if they were the sails of a windmill, and stared.

"Well, Magda, good-bye!"

"Oh, my poor fellow!"

"You will never see me again!"

"I shall never see you again!"

"There's no help for it!"

"May the Mother of God protect and shelter you!"

"Good-bye. Take care of the cottage."

The woman in tears embraced him

"May God guide you!"

The last moment had come. The whistle and the women's crying and sobbing drowned everything else. "Good-bye! Good-bye!" But the soldiers were already separated from the motley crowd, and formed a dark, solid mass, moving forward in square columns with the certainty and regularity of clockwork. The order was given: "Take your seats!" Columns and squares broke asunder from the centre, marched with heavy strides towards the carriages, and jumped into them. The engine, now breathing like a dragon and exhaling streams of vapour, sent forth wreaths of grey smoke. The women cried and sobbed still louder; some of them hid their eyes with their handkerchiefs, others waved their hands towards the carriages; sobbing voices repeated the name of husband and son.

"Good-bye, Bartek!" Magda cried from amongst them.

¹ "They are going." "Jadom" and "jadą" are pronounced similarly.
—TRANSLATOR.

"Take care of yourself!— May the Mother of God—Good-bye! Oh, God!——"

"And take care of the cottage," answered Bartek.

The line of trucks suddenly trembled, the carriages knocked against one another—and went forward.

"And remember you have a wife and child," Magda cried, running after the train. "Good-bye, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Good-bye——"

On went the train, faster and faster, bearing away the warriors of Pognenbin, of both Krzywdas, of Nicdola, and Mizerów.

II

MAGDA, with the crowd of women, returned crying to Pognenbin, in one direction; in the other the train, bristling with bayonets, rushed into the grey distance, and Bartek with it. There seemed to be no end to the long cloud of smoke; Pognenbin was also scarcely visible. Only the lime-tree showed faintly, and the church tower, glistening as the rays of the sun played upon it. Soon the lime-tree also disappeared, and the gilt cross resembled a shining speck. As long as that speck continued to shine Bartek kept his eyes fixed upon it, but when that vanished too there were no bounds to the poor fellow's grief. A sense of great weakness came over him and he felt lost. So he began to look at the sergeant, for, after the Almighty, he already felt there was no one greater than he. The sergeant clearly knew what would become of Bartek now; he himself knew nothing, understood nothing. The sergeant sat on the bench, and, supporting his rifle between his knees, he lighted his pipe. The smoke rose in clouds hiding his grave, discontented face from time to time. Not Bartek's eyes alone watched his face; all the eyes from every corner of the carriage were watching it. At Pognenbin or Krzywdas every Bartek or Wojtek was his own master, each had to think about himself, and for himself, but now the sergeant would do this for him. He would command them to look to the right, and they would look to the right; he would command them to look to the left, and they would look to the left. The question, "Well, and what is to become of us?" stood in each man's eyes, but he knew as much as all of them put together, and also what was expected of them. If only one were able by glances to draw some command or explanation from him! But the men were

afraid to ask direct, as war was now drawing near with all the chances of being court-martialled. What was permitted and was not permitted, and by whom, was unknown. They, at least, did not know, and the sound of such a word as *Kriegsgericht*, though they did not understand it, frightened them very much.

They felt that this sergeant had still more power over them now than at the manœuvres in Poznań; he it was who knew everything, and without him nothing would be done. He seemed meanwhile to be finding his rifle growing heavy, for he pushed it towards Bartek to hold for him. Bartek reached out hastily for it, held his breath, stared, and looked at the sergeant as he would at a rainbow, yet derived little comfort from that. Ah, there must surely be bad news, for even the sergeant looked worried. At the stations one heard singing and shouting; the sergeant gave his orders, bustled about and swore, as if to show his importance. But let the train once move on, and every one, including himself, was silent. For him also the world now seemed to wear two aspects, the one clear and intelligible—that represented by home and family—the other dark, yes, absolutely dark—that of France and war. He effectually revived the spirits of the Pognenbin soldiers, not so much by his personality, as by the fact that each man carried him at the back of his mind. And since each soldier carried his knapsack on his shoulder, with his cloak and other warlike accoutrements, the whole load was extremely heavy.

All the while the train was shaking, roaring, and rushing along into space. Now, a station where they added fresh carriages and engines; now another, where helmets, cannon, horses, bayonets, and companies of lancers were to be seen. The fine evening drew in slowly. The sun sank in a deep crimson, and a number of light flying clouds spread from the edge of the darkening sky across to the west. The train, stopping frequently at the stations to pick up passengers and carriages, shook and rushed forward into that crimson brightness, as into a sea of blood. From the open carriage, in which Bartek and the Pognenbin troops were seated, one could see villages, hamlets, and little towns, church steeples, storks—looking like hooks, as they stood on one leg on their nests—isolated cottages, and cherry orchards. Everything was passed rapidly, and everything looked crimson. Meanwhile the soldiers, growing bolder, began to whisper to one another,

because the sergeant, having laid his kit bag under his head, had fallen asleep, with his clay pipe between his teeth. Wojtek Gwizdala, a peasant from Pognenbin, sitting beside Bartek, joggled his elbow.

"Bartek, listen!"

Bartek turned a face with pensive, wide open eyes towards him.

"Why do you look like a calf going to be slaughtered?" Gwizdala whispered. "True, you, poor beggar, are going to be slaughtered, that's certain!"

"Oh, my word!" groaned Bartek.

"Are you afraid?" Gwizdala asked.

"Why shouldn't I be afraid?"

The crimson in the sky was growing deeper still, so Gwizdala pointed towards it and went on whispering:

"Do you see that brightness? Do you know, blockhead, what that is? That's blood. Here's Poland—our frontier, say—do you understand? But there in the distance, where it's so bright, that's France itself."

"And shall we be there soon?"

"Why are you in such a hurry? They say that it's a terribly long way. But never fear, the French will come out to meet us."

Bartek's Pognenbin brain began to work laboriously. After some moments he asked: "Wojtek!"

"Yes?"

"What sort of people are these Frenchmen?"

Here Wojtek's wisdom suddenly became aware of a pitfall into which it might be easier to tumble head foremost than to come out again. He knew that the French were the French. He had heard something about them from old people, who had related that they were always fighting with every one; he knew at least that they were very strange people. But how could he explain this to Bartek to make him understand how strange they were? First of all, therefore, he repeated the question:

"What sort of people?"

"Why, yes."

Now there were three nations known to Wojtek: living in the centre were the Poles; on the one side were the Russians, on the other the Germans. But there were various kinds of Germans. Preferring, therefore, to be clear rather than accurate, he said:

"What sort of people are the French? How can I tell you? They must be like the Germans, only worse."

At which Bartek exclaimed: "Oh, the low vermin!"

Up to that time he had had one feeling only with regard to the French, and that was a feeling of unspeakable fear. Henceforth this Prussian reservist cherished the hatred of a true patriot towards them. But not feeling quite clear about it all, he asked again: "Then Germans will be fighting Germans?"

Here Wojtek, like a second Socrates, chose to adopt a simile, and answered:

"But doesn't your dog, Lysek, fight with my Burek?"

Bartek opened his mouth and looked at his instructor for a moment.

"Ah! true."

"And the Austrians are Germans," explained Wojtek, "and haven't they fought against us? Old Świerszcz said that when he was in that war Steinmetz used to shout: 'On, boys, at the Germans!' Only that's not so easy with the French."

"Good God!"

"The French have never been beaten in any war. When they attack you, don't be afraid, don't disgrace yourself. Each man is worth two or three of us, and they wear beads like Jews. There are some as dark as the devil. Now that you know what they are like, commend yourself to God!"

"Well, but then why do we run after them?" Bartek asked in desperation.

This philosophical remark was possibly not as stupid as it appeared to Wojtek, who, evidently influenced by official opinion, quickly had his answer ready.

"I would rather not have gone myself, but if we don't run after them, they will run after us. There's no help for it. You have read what the papers say. It's against us peasants that they bear the chief grudge. People say that they have their eyes on Poland, because they want to smuggle vodka out of the country, and the Government won't allow it, and that's why there's war. Now do you understand?"

"I cannot understand," Bartek said resignedly.

"They are also as greedy for our women as a dog for a bone," Wojtek continued.

"But surely they would respect Magda, for example?"

"They don't even respect age!"

"Oh!" cried Bartek in a voice implying, "If that is so, then I will fight!"

In fact this seemed to him really too much. Let them

continue to smuggle vodka out of Poland—but let them dare to touch Magda! Our friend Bartek now began to regard the whole war from the standpoint of his own interests, and took courage in the thought of how many soldiers and cannon were going out in defence of Magda, who was in danger of being outraged by the French. He arrived at the conviction that there was nothing for it but to go out against them.

Meanwhile the brightness had faded from the sky, and it had grown dark. The carriages began to rock violently on the uneven rails, and the helmets and bayonets shook from right to left to the rhythm of the rocking. Hour after hour passed by. Millions of sparks flew from the engine and crossed one another in the darkness, serpentine in long golden lines. For a while Bartek could not sleep. Like those sparks in the wind, thoughts leapt into his mind about Magda, about Pognenbin, the French, and the Germans. He felt that though he would have liked to have lain down on the bench on which he was sitting, he could not do so. He fell asleep, it is true, but it was a heavy, unrefreshing sleep, and he was at once pursued by dreams. He saw his dog, Lysek, fighting with Wojtek's Burek, till all their hair was torn off. He was running for a stick to stop them, when suddenly he saw something else: sitting with his arm round Magda was a dark Frenchman, as dark as the earth; but Magda was smiling contentedly. Some Frenchmen jeered at Bartek, and pointed their fingers at him. In reality it was the engine screaming, but it seemed to him that the French were calling, "Magda! Magda! Magda!" "Hold your tongue, thieves," Bartek shouted; "ave my wife alone!" but they continued calling "Magda! Magda! Magda!" Lysek and Burek started barking, and all Pognenbin cried out, "Don't let your wife go!" Was he bound, or what was the matter? No, he rushed forward, tore at the cord and broke it, seized the Frenchman by the head— and suddenly——'

Suddenly he was seized with severe pain, as from a heavy blow. Bartek awoke and dragged his feet to the ground. The whole carriage awoke, and every one asked, "What has happened?" In his sleep the unfortunate Bartek had seized the sergeant by the head. He stood up immediately, as straight as a fiddle-string, two fingers at his forehead; but the sergeant waved his hand, and shouted like mad:

"*Ach, Sie!* beast of a Pole! I'll knock all the teeth out of your head—blockhead!"

The sergeant shouted until he was hoarse with rage, and Bartek stood saluting all the while. Some of the soldiers bit their lips to keep from laughing, but they were half afraid, too. A parting shot burst forth from the sergeant's lips:

"You Polish ox! Ox from Podolia!"

Ultimately everything became quiet again. Bartek sat back in his old place. He was conscious of nothing but that his cheek was swollen, and, as if playing him a trick, the engine kept repeating:

"Magda! Magda! Magda!"

He felt a heavy weight of sorrow upon him.

III

It was morning.

The fitful, pale light fell on faces sleepy and worn with a long, restless night. The soldiers were sleeping in discomfort on the seats, some with their heads thrown forward, others with their noses in the air. The dawn was rising, and flooding all the world with crimson light. The air was fresh and keen. The soldiers awoke. The morning rays were drawing away shadows and mist into some region unknown. Alas! and where was now Pognenbin, where Great and Little Kzrywda, where Mizerów? Everything was strange and different. The summits of the hills were overgrown with trees; in the valleys were houses hidden under red roofs, with dark cross beams on the white walls—beautiful houses like mansions, covered with vines. Here, churches with spires; there, factory chimneys with wreaths of purple smoke. There were only straight lines, level banks, and fields of corn. The inhabitants swarmed like ants. They passed villages and towns, and the train went through a number of unimportant stations without stopping. Something must have happened, for there were crowds to be seen everywhere. When the sun slowly began to appear from behind the hills, one or two of the soldiers commenced saying a prayer aloud. Others followed their example, and the first rays of splendour fell on the men's earnest, devout faces.

Meanwhile the train had stopped at a larger station. A crowd of people immediately surrounded it: news had come from the seat of war. Victory! Victory! Telegrams had been arriving for several hours. Every one had anticipated defeat,

so, when roused by the unexpected news, their joy knew no bounds. People rushed half-clad from their houses and their beds, and ran to the post office. Flags were waving from the roofs, and handkerchiefs from every one's hands. Beer, tobacco, and cigars were carried to the carriages. The enthusiasm was unspeakable; every one's face was beaming. *Wacht am Rhein* filled the air continuously like a tempest. Not a few were weeping, others embraced one another. The enthusiasm animating the crowd imparted itself to the gallant soldiers, their courage rose, and they, too, began to sing. The carriages trembled with their strong voices, and the crowd listened in wonder to their unintelligible songs. The men from Pognenbin sang:

Bartosz! Bartosz! never lose hope!

"The Poles, the Poles!" repeated the crowd by way of explanation, and, gathering round the carriages, admired their soldierly bearing, and added to their joy by relating anecdotes of the remarkable courage of these Polish regiments.

Bartek had unshaven cheeks, which, in addition to his yellow moustache, goggle-eyes, and large bony form, made him look terrifying. They gazed at him as at some wild beast. These, then, were the men who were to defend Germany! He'd dispose of the French sure enough! Bartek smiled with satisfaction, for he, too, was pleased they had beaten the French. Now the French would not go to Pognenbin, they would not make off with Magda, nor capture his land. So he smiled, but as his cheek hurt him badly he made a grimace at the same time, and did certainly look terrifying. Then, displaying the appetite of a Homeric warrior, he caused pea-sausages and pints of beer to disappear into his mouth as into a vacuum. People in the crowd gave him cigars and pence, and they all drank to one another.

"There's some good in this German nation," he said to Wojtek, adding after a moment, "and you know they have beaten the French!"

But Wojtek, the sceptic, cast a shadow on his joy. Wojtek had forebodings, like Cassandra.

"The French always allow themselves to be beaten at first, in order to take you in, and then they set to until they have cut you to pieces!"

Wojtek did not know that the greater part of Europe shared

his opinion, and still less that all Europe was together with him mistaken.

They travelled on. All the houses were covered with flags. They stopped a long while at several of the stations, because there was a block of trains everywhere. Troops were hastening from all sides of Germany to reinforce their brothers in arms. The trains were swathed in green wreaths, and the lancers had decorated their lances with the bunches of flowers given them on the way. The majority of these lancers also were Poles. More than one conversation and greeting was heard passing from carriage to carriage:

"How are you, old fellow, and where is God Almighty leading you?"

Meanwhile to the accompaniment of the train rumbling along the rails, the well-known song rang out:

"Flirt with us, soldiers dear!"
Cried the girls of Sandomir.

And soon Bartek and his comrades caught up the refrain:

Gaily forth the answer burst.
"Bless you, dears! but dinner first!"

As many as had gone out from Pognenbin in sorrow were now filled with enthusiasm and spirit. A train which had arrived from France with the first batch of wounded, damped, however, this feeling of cheerfulness. It stopped at Deutz, and waited a long time to allow the trains hurrying to the seat of war to go by. The men were marched across the bridge *en route* for Cologne. Bartek ran forward with several others to look at the sick and wounded. Some lay in closed, others in open carriages, and these latter could be seen well. At the first glance our hero's heart was again in his mouth.

"Come here, Wojtek," he cried in terror. "See how many of our countrymen the Frenchmen have done for!"

It was indeed a sight! Pale, exhausted faces, some darkened by gunpowder or by pain, or stained with blood. To the sounds of universal rejoicing these men only responded by groans. Some were cursing the war, the French and the Germans. Parched lips called every moment for water, eyes rolled in delirium. Here and there, amongst the wounded, were the rigid faces of the dead, in some cases peaceful, with blue lines round their eyes, in others contorted through the death struggle,

with terrifying eyes and grinning teeth. Bartek saw the bloody fruits of war for the first time, and once more confusion reigned in his mind. He seemed quite stupefied, as, standing in the crowd, with his mouth open, he was elbowed from every side, and pommelled on the neck by the police. He sought Wojtek's eyes, nudged him, and said:

"Wojtek, may Heaven preserve us! It's horrible!"

"It will be just the same with you."

"Jesu! Mary! That human beings should murder one another like this! When a fellow kills another the police take him off to the magistrate and prison!"

"Well, but now whoever kills most human beings is to be praised. What were you thinking of, blockhead? Did you think you would use gunpowder as in the manœuvres, and would shoot at targets instead of people?"

Here the difference between theory and practice certainly stood out clearly. Notwithstanding that our friend Bartek was a soldier, had attended manœuvres and drill, had practised rifle shooting, had known that the object of war was to kill people, now, when he saw blood flowing, and all the misery of war, it made him feel so sick and miserable he could hardly keep steady on his legs. He was impressed anew with respect for the French; this diminished, however, when they arrived at Cologne from Deutz. At the Central Station they saw prisoners for the first time. Surrounding them were a number of soldiers and people, who gazed at them with interest, but without hostility. Bartek elbowed his way through the crowd, and, looking into the carriage, was amazed.

A troop of French infantry in ragged cloaks, small, dirty, and emaciated, were packed into the carriages like a cask of herrings. Many of them stretched out their hands for the trifling gifts presented to them by the crowd, if the sentinels did not prevent them. Judging from what he had heard from Wojtek, Bartek had had a wholly different impression of the French, and this took his breath away. He looked to see if Wojtek were anywhere about, and found him standing close by.

"What did you say?" asked Bartek. "By all the saints! I shouldn't be more surprised if I had lost my head!"

"They must have shrunk somehow," answered Wojtek, equally disillusioned.

"What are they jabbering?"

"It's certainly not Polish."

Reassured by this impression, Bartek walked on past the carriages. "Miserable wretches!" he said, when he had finished his review of the regulars.

But the last carriages contained Zouaves, and these gave Bartek food for further reflection. From the fact that they sat huddled together in the carriages, it was impossible to discover whether each man were equal to two or three ordinary men; but, through the window, he saw the long, martial beards and grave faces of veteran soldiers with dark complexions and alarmingly shining eyes. Again Bartek's heart leapt to his mouth.

"These are the worst of all," he whispered low, as if afraid they might hear him.

"You have not seen those who have not let themselves be taken prisoner yet," replied Wojtek.

"Heaven preserve us!"

"Now do you understand?"

Having finished looking at the Zouaves, they walked on. At the last carriage Bartek suddenly started back as if he had touched fire.

"Oh, Wojtek, Lord help us!"

There was the dark—nearly black—face of a Turco at the open window, rolling his eyes so that the whites showed. He must have been wounded, for his face was contorted with pain.

"What 's the matter now?" asked Wojtek.

"That must be the Evil One, it 's not a soldier. Lord have mercy on my sins!"

"Look at his teeth!"

"May he go to perdition! I shan't look at him any longer."

Bartek was silent, then asked after a moment:

"Wojtek!"

"Yes?"

"Mightn't it be a good thing to cross oneself before any one like that?"

"The heathen don't understand anything about the holy Faith."

The signal was given for taking their seats. In a few moments the train was moving. When it grew dusk Bartek continually saw before him the Turco's dark face with the terrible white of his eyes. Judging from the feelings which at the moment animated this Pognenbin soldier, it would have been impossible to foretell his future deeds.

IV

THE particular share he took at first in the pitched battle of Gravelotte merely convinced Bartek of this fact—that in war there is plenty to look at, but nothing to do. For at the commencement he and his regiment were ordered to wait, with their rifles at their feet, at the bottom of a hill covered by a vineyard. The guns were booming in the distance, squadrons of cavalry charged past near at hand with a clatter which shook the earth; then the flags passed, then cuirassiers with drawn swords. The shells on the hill flew hissing across the blue sky in the form of small white clouds, then smoke filled the air and hid the horizon. The battle seemed like a storm which passes through a district without lasting long anywhere.

After the first hours, unusual activity was displayed round Bartek's regiment. Other regiments began to be massed round his, and in the spaces between them the guns, drawn by plunging horses, rushed along, and, hastily unlimbered, were pointed towards the hill. The whole valley became full of troops. Commands were now thundered from all sides, the aides-de-camp rushed about wildly, and the private soldiers said to one another:

"Ah! it will be our turn now! It's coming!"

Or inquired uneasily of one another:

"Isn't it time yet to start?"

"Surely it must be!"

The question of life and death was now beginning to hang in the balance. Something in the smoke which hid the horizon burst close at hand with a terrible explosion. The deep roar of the cannon and the crack of the rifle-firing was heard ever nearer; it was like an indistinct sound coming from a distance—then the mitrailleuse became audible. Suddenly the guns, placed in position, boomed forth until the earth and air trembled together. The shells whistled frightfully through Bartek's company. Watching, they saw something bright red, a little cloud, as it might be, and in that cloud something whistled, rushed, rattled, roared, and shrieked. The men shouted: "A shell! A shell!" and at the same moment this vulture of war sped forward like a gale, came near, fell, and burst! A terrible roar met the ear, a crash as if the world had collapsed, followed by a rushing sound, as before a puff of wind. Confusion reigned in the lines standing in the neighbourhood of the guns,

then came the cry and command "Stand ready!" Bartek stood in the front rank, his rifle at his shoulder, his head turned towards the hill, his mouth set—so his teeth were not chattering. He was forbidden to tremble, he was forbidden to shoot. He had only to stand still and wait! But now another shell burst—three, four, ten. The wind lifted the smoke from the hill: the French had already driven the Prussian battery from it, had placed theirs in position, and now opened fire on the valley. Every moment from under cover of the vineyard they sent forth long white columns of smoke. Protected by the guns, the enemy's infantry continued to advance, in order to open fire. They were already half-way down the hill and could now be seen plainly, for the wind was driving the smoke away. Would the vineyard prove an obstacle to them? No, the red caps of the infantry were advancing. Suddenly they disappeared under the tall arches of the vines, and there was nothing to be seen but tricolour flags waving here and there. The rifle fire began fiercely but intermittently, continually starting in fresh and unexpected places. Shells burst above it, and crossed one another in the air. Now and then cries rang out from the hill, which were answered from below by a German "Hurrah!" The guns from the valley sent forth an uninterrupted fire; the regiment stood unflinching.

The line of fire began to embrace it more closely, however. The bullets hummed in the distance like gnats and flies, or passed near with a terrible whiz. More and more of them came: hundreds, thousands, whistling round their heads, their noses, their eyes, their shoulders; it was astonishing there should be a man left standing. Suddenly Bartek heard a groan close by: "Jesu!" then: "Stand ready!" then again: "Jesu!" "Stand ready!" Soon the groans went on without intermission, the words of command came faster and faster, the lines drew in closer, the whizzing grew more frequent, more uninterrupted, more terrible. The dead covered the ground. It was like the Judgment Day.

"Are you afraid?" Wojtek asked.

"Why shouldn't I be afraid?" our hero answered, his teeth chattering.

Nevertheless both Bartek and Wojtek still kept their feet, and it did not even enter their heads to run away. They had been commanded to stand still and receive the enemy's fire. Bartek had not spoken the truth; he was not as much afraid

as thousands of others would have been in his place. Discipline held the mastery over his imagination, and his imagination had never painted such a horrible situation as this. Nevertheless, Bartek felt that he would be killed, and he confided this thought to Wojtek.

"There won't be room in heaven for the numbers they kill," Wojtek answered in an excited voice.

These words comforted Bartek perceptibly. He began to hope that his place in heaven had already been taken. Reassured with regard to this, he stood more patiently, conscious only of the intense heat, and with the perspiration running down his face. Meantime the firing became so heavy that the ranks were thinning visibly. There was no one to carry away the killed and wounded; the death rattle of the dying mingled with the whizz of shells and the din of shooting. One could see by the movement of the tricolour flags that the infantry hidden by the vines were coming closer and closer. The volleys of mitrailleuse decimated the ranks; the men were beginning to grow desperate.

But underlying this despair were impatience and rage. Had they been commanded to go forward, they would have gone like a whirlwind. It was impossible merely to stand still in one spot. A soldier suddenly threw down his helmet with his whole force, and exclaimed:

"(Curse it! One death is as good as another!"

Bartek again experienced such a feeling of relief from these words that he almost ceased to be afraid. For if one death was as good as another, what did anything matter? This rustic philosophy was calculated to arouse courage more rapidly than any other. Bartek knew that one death was as good as another, but it pleased him to hear it, especially, as the battle was now turning into a defeat. For here was a regiment which had never fired a single shot, and was already half annihilated. Crowds of soldiers from other regiments which had been scattered ran in amongst and round theirs in disorder; only these peasants from Pognenbin, Great and Little Krzywda, and Mizerów still remained firm, upholding Prussian discipline. But even amongst them a certain degree of hesitation now began to be felt. Another moment and they would have burst the restraint of discipline. The ground under their feet was already soft and slippery with blood, the stench of which mingled with the smell of gunpowder. In several places the lines could not join up

closely, because the dead bodies made gaps in them. At the feet of those men yet standing, the other half lay bleeding, groaning, struggling, dying, or in the silence of death. There was no air to breathe in. They began to grumble:

"They have brought us out to be slaughtered!"

"No one will come out of this!"

"Silence, Polish dogs!" sounded the officer's voice.

"I should just like you to be standing in my shoes!"

"*Steh! der Keil da!*"

Suddenly a voice began to repeat:

"We fly to thy patronage . . ."

Bartek instantly took it up:

"O holy Mother of God!"

And soon on that field of carnage a chorus of Polish voices was calling to the Defender of their nation, Our Lady of Czenstochowa:

"Despise not our petitions";

while from beneath their feet there came the accompaniment of groans: "Mary! Mary!" She had evidently heard them, for at that moment the aides-de-camp came galloping up, and the command rang forth: "Arms to the attack! Hurrah! Forward!" The crest of bayonets was suddenly lowered, the column stretched out into a long line and sprang towards the hill to seek with their bayonets the enemy they could not discover with their eyes. The men were, however, still two hundred yards from the foot of the hill, and they had to traverse that distance under a murderous fire. Would they not perish like the rest? Would they not be obliged to retreat? Perish they might, but retreat they could not, for the Prussian commander knows what tune will bring Polish soldiers to the attack. Amid the roar of cannon, amid the rifle fire and the smoke, the confusion and groaning, loudest of all sounded the drums and trumpets, playing the hymn at which every single drop of blood leapt in their veins. "Hurrah!" answered the Macki.¹ "As long as we live!"² Frenzy seized them. The fire met them full in the face. They went like a whirlwind over the prostrate bodies of men and horses, over the wrecks

¹ "Maćki" = "Tommies."—TRANSLATOR.

² The hymn in question was the national song, "Poland has not perished as long as we live," first sung by the Polish Legions under Napoleon; it won enormous popularity among the Poles, and is now the Polish national anthem.—M. M. G.

of cannon. They fell, but they went with a shout and a song. They had already reached the vineyard and disappeared into its enclosure. Only the song was heard, and at times a bayonet glittered. On the hill the firing became increasingly fierce. In the valley the trumpets kept on sounding. The French volleys continued faster and faster—still faster—and suddenly—

Suddenly they were silent.

Down in the valley that old war dog, Steinmetz, lighted his clay pipe, and said in a tone of satisfaction:

"You have only to play to them! The daredevils will do it!"

And actually in a few moments one of the proudly waving tricolours was suddenly raised aloft, then drooped, and disappeared.

"They are not joking," said Steinmetz.

Again the trumpets played the hymn, and a second Polish regiment went to the help of the first. In the enclosure a pitched battle with bayonets was taking place.

And now, O Muse, sing of our hero, Bartek, that posterity may know of his deeds! The fear, impatience, and despair of his heart had mingled into the single feeling of rage, and when he heard that music each vein stood out in him like cast iron. His hair stood on end, his eyes shot fire. He forgot everything that had made up his world; he no longer cared whether one death was as good as another. Grasping his rifle firmly in his hands, he leapt forward with the others. Reaching the hill, he fell down for the tenth time, struck his nose, and, bespattered with mud and the blood flowing from his nose, ran on madly and breathlessly, catching at the air with open mouth. He stared round, wishing to find some of the French in the enclosure as quickly as possible, and caught sight of three standing together near the flags. They were Marcos. Would Bartek retreat? No, indeed; he could have seized the horns of Lucifer himself now! He ran towards them at once, and they fell on him with a shout; two bayonets, like two deadly stings, had actually touched his chest already, but Bartek lowered his bayonet. A dreadful cry followed—a groan, and two dark bodies lay writhing convulsively on the ground.

At that moment the third, who carried the flag, ran up to help his two comrades. Like a fury, Bartek leapt on him with his whole strength. The firing flashed and roared in the distance, while Bartek's hoarse roar rang out through the smoke:

"Go to hell!"

And again the rifle in his hand described a fearful semicircle, again groans responded to his thrusts. The Turcos retreated in terror at the sight of this furious giant, but either Bartek misunderstood, or they shouted out something in Arabic, for it seemed to him that their thick lips distinctly uttered the cry: "Magda! Magda!"

"Magda will give it you! ' howled Bartek, and with one leap he was in the enemy's midst.

Happily at that moment some of his comrades ran up to his assistance. A hand-to-hand fight now took place in the enclosure of the vineyard. There was the crack of rifles at close quarters, and the hot breath of the combatants sounded through their nostrils. Bartek raged like a storm. Blinded by smoke, streaming with blood, more like a wild beast than a man, and regardless of everything, he mowed down men at each blow, broke rifles, cracked heads. His hands moved with the terrible swiftness of a machine sowing destruction. He attacked the ensign, and seized him by the throat with an iron grip. The ensign's eyes turned upwards, his face swelled, his throat rattled, and his hands let the pole fall.

"Hurrah!" cried Bartek, and, lifting the flag, he waved it in the air.

This was the flag raised aloft and drooping, which Steinmetz had seen from below.

But he could only see it for half a second, for in the next—Bartek had trampled it to shreds. Meanwhile his comrades were already rushing on ahead.

Bartek remained alone for a moment. He tore off the flag, hid it in his breast-pocket, and, having seized the pole in both hands, rushed after his comrades.

A crowd of Turcos, shouting in a barbarous tongue, now fled towards the gun placed on the summit of the hill, the Maćki after them, shouting, pursuing, striking with butt-end and bayonet.

The Zouaves, who were stationed by the guns, received the first men with rifle fire.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bartek.

The men ran up to the guns, and a fresh struggle took place round these. At that moment the second Polish regiment came to the aid of the first. The flag-pole in Bartek's powerful hands was now changed into a kind of infernal flail. Each stroke dealt by it opened a free passage through the close lines of the

French. The Zouaves and Turcos began to be seized with panic, and they fled from the place where Bartek was fighting. Within a few moments Bartek was sitting astride the gun, as he might his Pognenbin mare.

But scarcely had the soldiers had time to see him on this, when he was already on the second, after killing another ensign who was standing by it with the flag.

"Hurrah, Bartek!" repeatedly exclaimed the soldiers.

The victory was complete. All the ammunition was captured. The infantry fled, and after being surrounded by Prussian reinforcements on the other side of the hill, laid down their arms.

Bartek captured yet a third flag during the pursuit.

It was worth seeing him, when exhausted covered with blood, and blowing like a blacksmith's bellows, he now descended the hill together with the rest, bearing the three flags on his shoulder. The French? Why, what had not he alone done to them! By his side went Wojtek, scratched and scarred, so he turned to him and said:

"What did you say? Why, they are miserable wretches; there isn't a scrap of strength in their bones! They have just scratched you and me like kittens, and that's all. But how I have bled them you can see by the ground!"

"Who would have known that you could be so brave!" replied Wojtek, who had watched Bartek's deeds, and began to look at him in quite a different light.

But who had not seen these deeds? History, all the regiment and the greater number of the officers. Everybody now looked with astonishment at this country giant with the flaxen moustache and goggle eyes. The major himself said to him, "Ah, you confounded Pole!" and pulled his ear, making Bartek grin to his back teeth with pleasure. When the regiment stood once more at the foot of the hill, the major pointed him out to the colonel, and the colonel to Steinmetz himself.

The latter noticed the flags, and ordered that they should be taken charge of; then he began to look at Bartek. Our friend Bartek again stood as straight as a fiddle-string, presenting arms, and the old general looked at him and nodded his head with approval. Finally he began to say something to the colonel; the words "non-commissioned officer" were plainly audible.

"Foo stupid, your Excellency!" answered the major.

"Let us try," said his Excellency, and turning his horse, he approached Bartek.

Bartek himself scarcely knew what was happening to him: it was a thing unknown in the Prussian army for the general to talk to a private! His Excellency was the more easily able to do this, because he knew Polish. Moreover this private had captured three flags and two guns.

"Where do you come from?" inquired the general.

"From Pognenbin," answered Bartek.

"Good. Your name?"

"Bartek Slowik."

"*Mensch*," explained the major.

"Mens!" Bartek tried to repeat.

"Do you know why you are fighting the French?"

"I know, your 'Cellency."

"Tell me."

Bartek began to stammer, "Because, because——" Then on a sudden Wojtek's words fortunately came into his mind, and he burst out with them quickly, so as not to get confused: "Because they are Germans too, only worse villains!"

His Excellency's face began to twitch as if he felt inclined to burst out laughing. After a moment, however, his Excellency turned to the major, and said:

"You are right, sir."

Our friend Bartek, satisfied with himself, remained standing as straight as a fiddle-string.

"Who won the battle to-day?" the general asked again.

"I, your 'Cellency," Bartek answered without hesitation.

His Excellency's face again began to twitch.

"Right, very right, it was you! And here you have your reward."

Here the old soldier unpinned the iron cross from his own breast, stooped and pinned it on to Bartek. The general's good humour was reflected in a perfectly natural way on the faces of the colonel, the majors, the captains, down to the non-commissioned officers. After the general's departure the colonel for his own part presented Bartek with ten thalers, the major with five, and so on. Every one repeated to him smilingly that he had won the battle, with the result that Bartek was in the seventh heaven.

It was a strange thing: the only person who was not really satisfied with our hero was Wojtek.

In the evening, when they were both sitting round the fire, and when Bartek's distinguished face was bulging as much with pea-sausage as the sausage itself with peas, Wojtek ejaculated in a tone of resignation:

"Oh, Bartek, what a blockhead you are, because——"

"But why?" said Bartek, between his bites of sausage.

"Why, man, didn't you tell the general that the French are Germans?"

"You said so yourself."

"But you ought to have remembered the general and the officers are Germans too."

"And what of that? ——"

Wojtek began to stammer a little:—"Well, though they may be Germans, you needn't have told him so, because it's always unpleasant——"

"But I said it about the French, not about them . . ."

"Ah, because when . . ."

Wojtek stopped short, though evidently wishing to say something further; he wished to explain to Bartek that it is not suitable when among Germans to speak evil of them, but somehow his tongue became entangled.

V

A LITTLE while later the royal Prussian mail brought the following letter to Pognenbin:

May Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother be praised

DEAREST MAGDA! What news of you? It is all right for you to be able to rest quietly in bed at home, but I am fighting horribly hard here. We have been surrounding the great fort of Metz, and there was a battle, and I did for so many of the French that all the Infantry and Artillery were astonished. And the General himself was astonished, and said that I had won the battle, and gave me a cross. And the officers and non-commissioned officers respect me very much now, and rarely box my ears. Afterwards we marched on farther, and there was a second battle, but I have forgotten what the town was called; there also I seized and carried off four flags, and knocked down one of the biggest Colonels in the Cuirassiers, and took him prisoner. And as our regiment is going to be sent home, the Sergeant has advised me to ask to be transferred and to stay on here, for in war it is only sleep you do not get, but you may eat as much as you can stand, and in this country there is wine everywhere, for they are a rich nation. We have also burnt a town and we did not spare even women or children, nor did I.

The church was burnt to the ground, because they are Catholics, and a good few people were roasted. We are now going on to the Emperor himself, and that will be the end of the war, but you take care of the cottage and Franek, for if you do not take care of it, then I will beat you till you have learnt what sort of a man I am. I commend you to God.

BARTŁOMIEJ SLOWIK.

Bartek was evidently developing a taste for war, and beginning to regard it as his proper trade. He felt greater confidence in himself, and now went into battle as he might have gone to his work at Pognenbin. Medals and crosses covered his breast, and although he did not become a non-commissioned officer, he was universally regarded as the foremost private in the regiment. He was always well disciplined, as before, and possessed the blind courage of the man who simply takes no account of danger. The courage actuating him was no longer of the same kind as that which had filled him in his first moments of fury, for it now sprang from military experience and faith in himself. Added to this, his giant strength could endure all kinds of fatigue, marches and overstrain. Men fell at his side; he alone went on unharmed, only working all the harder and developing more and more into the stern Prussian soldier. He now not only fought the French, but hated them. Some of his other ideas also changed. He became a soldier-patriot, blindly extolling his leaders. In another letter to Magda, he wrote:

Wojtek is divided in his opinion, and so there is a quarrel between us, do you understand? He is a scoundrel, too, because he says that the French are Germans, but they are French, and we are Germans.

Magda, in her reply to both letters, set about abusing him with the first words that came into her head.

Dearest Bartek [she wrote], married to me before the holy Altar! May God punish you! You yourself are a scoundrel, you heathen, going with those wretches to murder half a nation of Catholics. Do you not understand, then, that those wretches are Lutherans, and that you, a Catholic, are helping them? You like war, you ruffian, because you are able now to do nothing but fight, drink, and ill-treat others, and to go without fasting and burn churches. But may you burn in hell for that, because you are even proud of it, and have no thought for old people or children. Remember what has been written in golden letters in the Holy Scriptures for the Polish nation, from the beginning of the world to the Judgment

Day—when God most High will have no regard for sluggards,—and restrain yourself, you Turk, that I may not smash your head to pieces I have sent you five thalers, although I have need of them here, for I do not know which way to turn, and the household savings are getting short. I embrace you, dearest Bartek.

MAGDA.

The moral contained in these lines made little impression on Bartek. "The wife does not remember her vows," he thought to himself, "and is meddling." And he continued to make war in his old way. He distinguished himself in every battle so greatly, that finally he came under still more honourable eyes than those of Steinmetz. Ultimately, when the shattered Polish regiment was sent back into the depths of Germany, he took the sergeant's advice of applying for leave to be transferred, and stayed behind. The result of this was that he found himself outside Paris.

His letters were now full of contempt for the French. "They run away like hares in every battle," he wrote to Magda, and he wrote the truth. But the siege did not prove to his taste. He had to dig or to lie in the trenches round Paris for whole days, listening to the roar of the guns, and often getting soaked through. Besides, he missed his old regiment. In the one to which he had been transferred as a volunteer, he was surrounded by Germans. He knew some German, having already learnt a little at the factory, but only about five in ten words; now he quickly began to grow familiar with it. The regiment, however, nicknamed him "the Polish ox," and it was only his decorations and his terrifying fists which shielded him from disagreeable jokes. Nevertheless, he earned the respect of his new comrades, and began little by little to make friends with them. Since he covered the whole regiment with glory, they ultimately came to look upon him as one of themselves. Bartek would always have considered himself insulted if any one called him German, but in thinking of himself in distinction to the French he called himself "*ein Deutscher*." To himself he appeared entirely different, but at the same time he did not wish to pass for worse than others. An incident occurred, nevertheless, which might have given him plenty to reflect upon, had reflection come more easily to this hero's mind. Some companies of his regiment had been sent out against some volunteer sharpshooters, and laid an ambush for them, into which they fell. But the detachment was composed of veteran

soldiers, the remains of one of the regiments of the Foreign Legion, and this time Bartek did not see the red caps running away after the first shots. They defended themselves stubbornly when surrounded, and rushed forward to force their way through the encircling Prussian soldiery. They fought so desperately that half of them cut their way through, and knowing the fate that awaited captured sharpshooters, few allowed themselves to be taken alive. The company in which Bartek was serving therefore only took two prisoners. These were lodged overnight in a forester's house, and the next day they were to be shot. A small guard of soldiers stood outside the door, but Bartek was stationed in the room under the open window with the prisoners, who were bound.

One of the prisoners was a man no longer young, with a grey moustache, and a face expressing indifference to everything; the other appeared to be about twenty-two years of age. With his fair moustache scarcely yet showing, his face was more like a woman's than a soldier's.

"Well, this is the end of it," the young man said after a while: "a bullet through your head -and it's all over!"

Bartek shuddered until the rifle in his hand rattled; the youth talked Polish.

"It is all the same to me," the second answered in a gruff voice; "upon my word, all the same! I have lived so long, I have had enough."

Bartek's heart beat quicker and quicker under his uniform.

"Listen, then," the older man continued; "there is no help for it. If you are afraid, think about something else, or go to sleep. Enjoy what you can. God is my witness I don't care!"

"My mother will grieve for me," the youth replied low; and, evidently wishing to suppress his emotion, or else to deceive himself, he began to whistle. He suddenly broke this off, and cried in a voice of deep despair, "I did not even say good-bye."

"Then did you run away from home?"

"Yes. I thought the Germans would be beaten, so there would be better things coming for Poland."

"And I thought the same. But now——"

Waving his hand, the old man finished speaking in a low voice, and his last words were overpowered by the roar of the wind. The night was dark. Clouds of fine rain swept past from time to time; the wood close by was black as a pall. The gale whistled round the corners of the room, and howled in the

chimney like a dog. The lamp, placed high above the window to prevent the wind from extinguishing it, threw a flood of bright light into the room. But Bartek, who was standing close to it under the window, was plunged in darkness.

And it was perhaps better the prisoners should not see his face, for strange things were taking place in this peasant's mind. At first he had been filled with astonishment, and had stared hard at the prisoners, trying to understand what they were saying. So these men had set out to beat the Germans to benefit Poland, and he had beaten the French, in order that Poland might benefit! And to-morrow these two men would be shot! How was that? What was a poor fellow to think about it? But if only he could hint it to them, if only he could tell them that he was their man, that he pitied them! He felt a sudden catch in his throat. What could he do for them? Could he rescue them? Then he, too, would be shot! Good God! What was happening to him? He was so overcome by pity that he could not remain in the room.

A strange intense longing suddenly came upon him till he seemed somewhere far off at Pognenbin. Pity, hitherto an unknown guest in his soldier's heart, cried to him from the depth of his soul: "Bartek, save them, they are your brothers!" and his heart, torn as never before, cried out for home, for Magda, for Pognenbin. He had had enough of the French, enough of this war, and of battles! The voice sounded clearer and clearer: "Bartek, save them!" Confound this war! The woods showed dark through the open window, moaning like the Pognenbin pines, and even in that moan something called out, "Bartek, save them!"

What could he do? Should he escape to the wood with them, or what? All his Prussian discipline recoiled in aversion from the thought. In the Name of the Father and the Son! He could but cross himself before it! He—a soldier, and desert? Never!

All the while the wood was moaning more loudly, the wind whistling more mournfully.

The elder prisoner suddenly whispered "That wind—like the autumn at home."

"Leave me in peace!" the young man said in a Pognenbin voice.

After a moment, however, he repeated several times:

"At home, at home, at home! God! God!"

Deep sighs mingled with the listening wind, and the prisoners lay silent once more.

Bartek began to tremble feverishly. There is nothing so bad for a man as to be unable to tell what is amiss with him. It seemed to Bartek as if he had stolen something, and were afraid of being taken in charge. He had a clear conscience, nothing threatened him, but he was certainly terribly afraid of something. Indeed, his legs were trembling, his rifle had grown dreadfully heavy, and something—like bitter sobs—was choking him. Were these for Magda, or for Pognenbin? For both, but also for that younger prisoner whom it was impossible to help.

At times Bartek fancied he must be asleep. All the while the storm raged more fiercely round the house, and the cries and voices multiplied strangely in the whistling of the wind.

Suddenly every hair of Bartek's head stood on end under his helmet. For it seemed as if somewhere from out of the dark, rain-clad depths of the forest somebody were groaning, and repeating: "At home, at home, at home!"

Bartek started back, and struck the floor with the butt end of his rifle to wake himself. He regained consciousness somehow and looked up. The prisoners lay in the corner, the lamp was burning brightly, the wind was howling—all was in order.

The light fell full on to the face of the younger prisoner—a child's or girl's face. As he lay there with closed eyes, and straw under his head, he looked as if he were already dead.

Never in his life had Bartek been so wrung with pity! Something distinctly gripped his throat, and an audible cry was wrung from his breast.

At that moment the elder prisoner turned wearily on to his side, and said, "Good night, Wladek." Silence followed. An hour passed.

The wind played like the Pognenbin organ. The prisoners lay silent. Suddenly the younger prisoner, raising himself a little by an effort, called, "Karol!"

"What?"

"Are you asleep?"

"No."

"Listen! I am afraid. Say what you like, but I shall pray."

"Pray, then."

"Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come."

Sobs suddenly interrupted the young prisoner's words, yet the broken voice was still heard: "Thy—will—be—done!"

"Oh, Jesu!" something cried in Bartek. "Oh, Jesu!"

Impossible! He could stand it no longer. Another moment, and exclaiming, Sir, I am only a peasant!" he had leapt with them through the window into the wood. Let come what may! Suddenly measured steps were heard echoing from the direction of the hall: it was the patrol, the sergeant with it. They were changing the guard!

Next day Bartek was drunk all day from early morning. The following day likewise. . . .

But fresh advances, fighting, and marches took place during the following days, and I am glad to say that our hero regained his equilibrium. A certain fondness for the bottle, in which it is always possible to find pleasure, and at times forgetfulness, remained with him after that night, however. For the rest, in battle he was more terrible than ever; victory followed in his wake.

VI

SOME months had passed, and the spring was now well advanced. The cherry trees at Pognenbin were in blossom and the young corn was sprouting abundantly in the fields. One day Magda, seated in front of the cottage, was peeling some rotten potatoes for dinner, fitter for cattle than for human beings. But it was spring-time, and poverty had visited Pognenbin. That could be seen, too, by the saddened and worried look on Magda's face. Possibly in order to distract herself, the woman, closing her eyes, sang in a thin, strained voice:

Alas, my Jasienko has gone to the war! he writes me letters;
Alas, and I his wife write to him, —for I cannot see him.

The sparrows twittered in the cherry trees as if they were trying to emulate her. She stopped her song and gazed absently at the dog sleeping in the sun, at the road passing the cottage, and the path leading from the road through the garden and field. Perhaps Magda glanced at the path because it led across to the station and, as God willed, she did not look in vain that day. A figure appeared in the distance, and the woman shaded her eyes with her hand, but she could not see clearly, being blinded by the glare. Lysek woke up, however, raised his head,

and giving a short bark, began to grow excited, pricking up his ears and turning his head from side to side. At the same moment the words of a song reached Magda indistinctly. Iysek sprang up suddenly and ran at full speed towards the newcomer. Then Magda turned a little pale.

"Is it Bartek—or not?"

She jumped up so quickly that the bowl of potatoes rolled on to the ground: there was no longer any doubt; Lysek was bounding up to his shoulder. The woman rushed forward, shouting in the full strength of her joy: "Bartek! Bartek!"

"Magda, here I am!" Bartek cried, throwing her a kiss, and hurrying towards her. He opened the gate, stumbled over the step so that he all but fell, recovered himself—and they were clasped in one another's arms.

The woman began to speak quickly:

"And I had thought that you would not come back. I thought: 'They will kill him!' How are you?—Let me see. How good to look at you! You are terribly thin! Oh, Jesu! Poor fellow!—Oh, my dearest! . . . He has come back, come back!"

For one moment she tore herself from his neck and looked at him, then threw herself on it again.

"Come back! The Lord be praised! Bartek, my darling! How are you? Go indoors! Franek is at school being teased by that horrid German! The boy is well. He's as dull in the upper story as you are. Oh, but it was time for you to come back! I didn't know any more which way to turn. I was miserable, I tell you, miserable! This whole poor house is going into ruins. The roof is off the barn. How are you? Oh, Bartek! Bartek! That I should actually see you, after all! What trouble I have had with the hay! The neighbours helped me, but they did it to help themselves! How are you? Well? Oh, but I am glad to have you—glad! The Lord watched over you. Go indoors. By God, it's like Bartek, and not like Bartek! What's the matter with you? Oh dear! Oh dear!"

At that instant Magda had become aware of a long scar running along Bartek's face across his left temple and cheek and down to his chin.

"It's nothing. A cuirassier did it for me, but I did the same for him. I have been in hospital."

"Oh, Jesu!"

"Why, it's a mere flea-bite."

"But you are starved to death."

"*Ruhig!*" answered Bartek.

He was in truth emaciated, begrimed, and in rags—a true conqueror! He swayed, too, as he stood.

"What's wrong with you? Are you drunk?"

"I—am still weak."

That he was weak was certain, but he was tipsy also. For one glass of vodka would have been sufficient in his state of exhaustion, and Bartek had drunk something like four at the station. The result was that he had the bearing of the true conqueror. He had not been like this formerly.

"*Ruhig!*" he repeated. "We have finished the *Krieg*. I am a gentleman now, do you understand? Look here!" He pointed to his crosses and medals. "Do you know who I am? Eh? *Links! Rechts! Heu! Stroh! Halt!*"

At the word "*Halt*," he gave such a shrill shout that the woman recoiled several steps.

"Are you mad?"

"How are you, Magda? When I say to you 'How are you,' then how are you? Do you know French, stupid? *Musiu, Musiu!* What is *Musiu*? I am a *Musiu*, do you understand?"

"Man, what's up with you?"

"What's that to you! *Was? Doné diner?* Do you understand?"

A storm began to gather on Magda's brow.

"What rubbish are you jabbering? What's this? Don't you know Polish? That's all through those wretches. I said how it would be! What have they done to you?"

"Give me something to eat!"

"Be quick indoors."

Every command made an irresistible impression on Bartek; hearing this "Be quick" he drew himself up, held his hand stiffly to his side, and, having made a half-turn, marched in the direction indicated. He stood still at the threshold, however, and began to look wonderingly at Magda.

"Well, what do you want, Magda? What do . . .?"

"Quick! March!"

He entered the cottage, but fell over the threshold. The vodka was now beginning to go to his head. He started singing, and looked round the cottage for Franek, even saying "*Morgen, Kerl*," although Franek was not there. After that he laughed

loudly, staggered, shouted "Hurrah!" and fell full length on the bed. In the evening he awoke sober and rested, and welcomed Franck; then, having got some pence out of Magda, he took his triumphant way to the inn. The glory of his deeds had already preceded him to Pognenbin, since more than one of the soldiers from other divisions of the same regiment, having returned earlier, had related how he had distinguished himself at Gravelotte and Sedan. So now when the rumour spread that the conqueror was at the inn, all his old comrades hastened there to welcome him.

No one would have recognized our friend Bartek, as he now sat at the table. He, formerly so meek, was to be seen striking his fist on the table, puffing himself out and gobbling like a turkey-cock.

"Do you remember, you fellows, that time I did for the French, what Steinmetz said?"

"How could we forget?"

"People used to talk about the French, and be frightened of them, but they are a poor lot—*was*? They eat like hares into the lettuce, and run away like hares, too. They don't drink beer either, nothing but strong wine."

"That's it!"

"When we burnt a town they would wring their hands immediately and cry '*Pitié, pitié*,'¹ as if they meant they would give us a drink if we would only leave them alone. But we paid no attention to them."

"Then can one understand their gibberish?" inquired a young farmer's lad.

"You wouldn't understand, because you are stupid, but I understand. '*Donédipé*!'² Do you understand?"

"What do you mean?"

"Do you know about Paris? We had one battle after another there, but we won them all. They have no good commanders. So people said. 'The ground enclosed by the hedge is good,' they say, 'but it has been badly managed.' Their officers are bad managers, and their generals are bad managers, but on our side they are good."

Maciej Kierz, the wise old innkeeper of Pognenbin, began to shake his head.

"Well, the Germans have been victorious in a terrible war:

¹ Polish "*picie*" = a drink.—TRANSLATOR.

² Polish *ε* = French *en*.—TRANSLATOR.

they have been victorious—but I always thought they would be. But the Lord alone knows what will come out of it for us.”

Bartek stared at him.

“What do you say?”

“The Germans have never cared to consider us much, anyhow, but now they will be as stuck-up as if there were no God above them. And they will ill-treat us still more than they do already.”

“But that’s not true!” Bartek said.

Old Kierz was a person of such authority in Pognenbin that all the village always thought as he did, and it was sheer audacity to contradict him. But Bartek was a conqueror now, and an authority himself. All the same they gazed at him in astonishment, and even in some indignation.

“Who are you, to quarrel with Maciej? Who are you——?”

“What’s Maciej to me? It isn’t to such as he that I have talked, you see! Why, you fellows, I talked, didn’t I, to Steinmetz—*was*? But let Maciej fancy what he likes. We shall be better off now.”

Maciej looked at the conqueror for a moment.

“You blockhead!” he said.

Bartek struck his fist on the table, making all the glasses and pint-pots start up.

“*Still, der Kerl da! Heu! Stroh!*”

“Silence, no row! Ask the priest or the count, blockhead.”

“Was the priest in the war? Or was the count there? But I was there. It’s not true, boys. They’ll know now how to respect us. Who won the battle? We won it, I won it. Now they’ll give us anything we ask for. If I had wanted to become a landowner in France, I should have stayed there. The Government knows very well who gave the French the best beating. And our regiment was the best. They said so in the military dispatches. So now the Poles will get the upper hand—do you see?”

Kierz waved his hand, stood up, and went out. Bartek had carried off the victory in the field of politics also. The young men remaining with him regarded him as a perfect marvel. He continued:

“As if they wouldn’t give me anything I want! If I don’t get it, I should like to know who would! Old Kierz is a scoundrel, do you see? The Government commands you to fight, so you must fight. Who will ill-treat me? The Germans? Is it likely?”

Here he again displayed his crosses and medals.

"And who did I beat the French for? Not for the Germans, surely? I am a better man now than a German, for there's not one German as strong. Bring us some beer! I have talked to Steinmetz, and I have talked to Podbielski. Bring us some beer!"

They slowly prepared for their carouse.

Bartek began to sing:

Drink, drink, drink,
As long as in my pocket
Still the pennies chink!

Suddenly he took a handful of pence from his pocket.

"Beer! I am a gentleman now—Won't you? I tell you in France we were not so flush of money; there was little we didn't burn, and few people we didn't put a shot into! God doesn't know which—of the French——"

A tippler's moods are subject to rapid changes. Bartek unexpectedly raked together the money from the table, and began to exclaim sadly:

"Lord, have mercy on the sins of my soul!"

Then, propping both elbows on the table, and hiding his head in his hands, he was silent.

"What's the matter?" inquired one of the drinkers.

"Why was I to blame for them?" Bartek murmured sadly. "It was their own look-out. I was sorry for them, for they were both my people. Lord! have mercy! One was as the ruddy dawn! Next day he was as white as linen. And even after that I still——Vodka!"

A moment of gloomy silence followed. The men looked at one another in astonishment.

"What is he saying?" one asked.

"He is settling something with his conscience."

"A man must drink in spite of that war."

He filled up his glass of vodka once or twice, then he spat, and his good humour unexpectedly returned.

"Have you ever stood talking to Steinmetz? But I have! Hurrah! Drink! Who pays? I do!"

"You may pay, you drunkard," sounded Magda's voice, "but I will repay you! Never fear!"

Bartek looked at his wife with glassy eyes.

"Have you talked to Steinmetz? Who are you?"

Instead of replying to him, Magda turned to the interested listeners, and began to exclaim:

"Oh, you men, you wretched men, do you see the disgrace and misery I am in? He came back, and I was glad to welcome him as a good man, but he came back drunk. He has forgotten God, and he has forgotten Polish. He went to sleep, he woke up sober, and now he's drinking again, and paying for it with my money, which I had earned by my own work. And where have you taken that money from? Isn't it what I have earned by all my trouble and slavery? I tell you men, he's no longer a Catholic, he's not a man any more, he's bewitched by the Germans, he jabbars German, and is just waiting to do harm to people. He's possessed . . ."

Here the woman burst into tears; then, raising her voice an octave higher: "He was stupid, but he was good. But now, what have they done to him? I looked out for him in the evening, I looked out for him in the morning, and I have lived to see him. There is no peace and no mercy anywhere. Great God! Merciful God! If you had only left it alone—if you had only remained German altogether!"

Her last words ended in such a wail, it was almost like a cadence. But Bartek merely said:

"Be quiet, or I shall do for you!"

"Strike me, hit my head, hit me now, kill me, murder me!" the woman screamed, and stretching her neck forward, she turned to the men.

"And you fellows, watch! —"

But the men were beginning to disperse. The inn was soon deserted, and only Bartek and his wife, with her neck stretched forward, remained.

"Why do you stretch out your neck like a goose?" murmured Bartek. "Go home."

"Hit me!" repeated Magda.

"Well, I shan't hit," replied Bartek, putting his hands into his pockets. Here the innkeeper, wishing to put an end to the quarrel, turned out one of the lights. The room became dark and silent. After a while Magda's shrill voice sounded through the darkness:

"Hit me!"

"I shan't hit," replied Bartek's triumphant voice.

Two figures were to be seen going by moonlight from the inn to the cottage. One of them, walking in front, was sobbing

loudly; that was Magda; after her, hanging his head and following humbly enough, went the victor of Gravelotte and Sedan.

VII

BARTEK went home so tipsy that for some days he was unfit for work. This was most unfortunate for all his household affairs, which were in need of a strong man to look after them. Magda did her best. She worked from morning till night, and the neighbours helped her as well as they could, but even so she could not make both ends meet, and the household was being ruined little by little. Then there were a few small debts to the German colonist, Just, who, having at a favourable moment bought some thirteen acres of waste land at Pognenbin, now had the best property in the whole village. He had ready money besides, which he lent out at sufficiently high interest. He lent it chiefly to the owner of the property, Count Jarzyński whose name shone in the "Golden Book,"¹ but who was obliged to keep up his house in a style of befitting splendour for that very reason. Just, however, also lent to peasants. For six months Magda had owed him some twenty thalers, part of which she had borrowed for her housekeeping, and part to send to Bartek during the war. Yet that need not have mattered. God had granted good crops, and it would have been possible to repay the debt out of the incoming harvest, provided that the hands and the labour were forthcoming. Unluckily Bartek could not work. Magda did not quite believe this, and went to the priest for help, thinking he might rouse her husband; but this was really impossible. When at all tired, Bartek grew short of breath and his wounds pained him. So he sat in front of the cottage all day long, smoking his clay pipe with the figure of Bismarck in white uniform and a cuirassier's helmet, and gazed at the world with the drowsy eyes of a man still feeling the effects of bodily fatigue. He pondered a little on the war, a little on his victories, on Magda—a little on everything, a little on nothing.

One day, as he sat thus, he heard Franek crying in the distance on his way home from school. He was howling till the echoes rang.

Bartek pulled his pipe out of his mouth.

¹ List of Polish nobility.—M. M. G.

"Why, Franck, what 's the matter with you?"

"What 's the matter?" repeated Franek, sobbing.

"Why are you crying?"

"Why shouldn't I cry, when I have had my ears boxed?"

"Who boxed your ears?"

"Who? Why, Herr Boege!"

Herr Boege filled the post of schoolmaster at Pognenbin.

"And has he a right to box your ears?"

"I suppose so, as he did it."

Magda, who had been hoeing in the garden, came through the hedge, and, with the hoe in her hand, went up to the child.

"What are you saying?" she asked.

"What am I saying? If that Boege didn't call me a Polish pig, and give me a box on the ears, and say that just as they have beaten the French now, so they will trample us underfoot, for they are the strongest. And I had done nothing to him, but he had asked me who is the greatest person in the world, and I had said it was the Holy Father, but he boxed my ears, and I began to cry, and he called me a Polish pig, and said that just as they have beaten the French . . ."

Franck was beginning it all over again, "and he said, and I said ——" but Magda covered his mouth with her hand, and she herself, turning to Bartek, exclaimed:

"Do you hear? Do you hear? Go to the French war, then let a German beat your child like a dog! Curse him! Go to the war, and let this Swabian kill your child! You have your reward! . . . May . . ."

Here Magda, moved by her own eloquence, also began to cry to Franck's accompaniment. Bartek stared open-mouthed with astonishment, and could not bring out a single word, or comprehend in the least what had happened. How was this? And what of his victories? He sat on in silence for some moments, then suddenly something leaped into his eyes, and the blood rushed to his face. With ignorant people astonishment, like terror, often turns to rage. Bartek sprang up suddenly, and jerked out through his clenched teeth:

"I will talk to him!"

And he went out. It was not far to go; the school lay close to the church. Herr Boege was just then standing in front of the veranda, surrounded by a herd of young pigs, to which he was throwing pieces of bread.

He was a tall man, about fifty years of age, still as vigorous

as an oak. He was not particularly stout, but his face was very fat, and he had a pair of very protruding eyes, which expressed courage and energy.

Bartek went up to him very quickly.

"German, why have you been beating my child? *Was?*" he asked.

Herr Boege took a few steps backwards, measured him with a glance without a shade of fear, and said phlegmatically:

"Begone, Polish prizefighter!"

"Why have you been beating my child?" repeated Bartek.

"I will beat you, too, you low Polish scoundrel! I will show you who is master here. Go to the devil, go to the law—begone!"

Bartek, having seized the schoolmaster by the shoulder, began to shake him roughly, crying in a hoarse voice:

"Do you know who I am? Do you know who did for the French? Do you know who talked to Steinmetz? Why do you beat my child, you cursed Swabian dog?"

Herr Boege's protruding eyes glared no less than Bartek's, but Boege was a strong man, and he resolved to free himself from his assailant by a single blow. This blow descended with a loud smack on the face of the victor of Gravelotte and Sedan.

At that the man forgot everything. Boege's head was shaken from side to side, with a swift motion recalling a pendulum, but with this difference that the shaking was alarmingly rapid. The formidable vanquisher of Turcos and Zouaves awoke in Bartek once more. Boege's twelve-year-old son, Oscar, a lad as strong as his father, ran in vain to his assistance. A short, but terrible struggle took place, in which the son fell to the ground, and the father felt himself lifted up into the air. Bartek, raising his hands, held him there, he himself scarcely knew how. Unluckily the tub of dishwater, which Herr Boege had been assiduously mixing for the pigs, stood near. Into this tub Herr Boege now capsized, and a moment later his feet were to be seen projecting from it, and kicking violently. His wife darted out of the house:

"Help, to the rescue!"

The German colonists rushed from the houses near to their neighbour's assistance. Some of them fell on Bartek and began to belabour him with sticks and stones. In the general confusion which followed it was difficult to distinguish Bartek from his

adversaries: some thirteen bodies were to be seen rolling round in a single mass, and struggling convulsively.

Suddenly, however, from out of this fighting mass Bartek burst forth like fury, making towards the hedge with all his might.

The Germans ran after him, but an alarming crack was heard in the hedge at the same moment, and Bartek's iron hands brandished a stout stick.

He returned raging and furious, holding the stick in the air; they all fled.

Bartek went after them, but luckily did not overtake any one. Thus his rage cooled, and he began to retreat homewards. Ah! if only it had been the French he had been facing! His retreat would then have made immortal history.

As it was, he was being attacked by about a dozen people who, when they had reassembled, set on him afresh. Bartek retired slowly, like a wild boar pursued by dogs. He turned round now and then and stood still: then his pursuers stood still too. The stick had earned their complete respect.

They threw stones at him, nevertheless, one of which wounded Bartek in the forehead. The blood poured into his eyes, and he felt himself growing faint. He swayed once or twice, let go the stick, and fell down.

"Hurrah!" cried the Germans.

But by the time they reached him, Bartek had got up again: then they held back. This wounded wolf was still dangerous. Besides, he was now not far from the first cottage, and some labourers could be seen in the distance hurrying to the battlefield at full speed. The Germans retired to their houses.

"What has happened?" inquired the newcomers.

"I have been trying my hand a bit on the Germans," Bartek answered. And he fainted.

VIII

It proved a serious affair. The German newspapers published flaming articles on the persecutions to which the peaceful German population was subjected at the hands of the barbarian and ignorant masses, who were roused by socialist agitation and religious fanaticism. Boege became a hero. He, the quiet, gentle schoolmaster, spreading the light of learning on the far borders of the empire; he, the true missionary of culture amid

barbarians, had fallen a first victim to the riot. It was fortunate that there were a hundred million Germans to stand up for him, who would never allow . . . And so on.

Bartek did not know what a storm was brewing over his head. On the contrary, he was in good spirits; he was certain that he would win at the trial. For Boege had beaten his child, and had dealt him the first blow, and it had afterwards been he who had been attacked from behind! Surely he had a right to defend himself. They had also thrown a stone at his head—actually thrown it at him, who had been mentioned in the daily dispatches, who had won the battle of Gravelotte, had talked to Steinmetz himself, and received so many medals. It is true it never entered his head that the Germans did not know all this when they wronged him so greatly, any more than it occurred to him that Boege could substantiate his threat to Pognenbin that the Germans would now trample it underfoot in the same way in which they, the Pognenbinites, had so thoroughly beaten the French whenever they had had an opportunity. But as for himself, he was certain that public opinion and the Government would be in his favour. They would certainly know who he was, and what he had done during the war. If he was not a different man to what he thought him, Steinmetz would espouse his cause. Since Bartek was the poorer through the war, and his house in debt, they would, anyhow, not refuse to do him justice.

All the same, the police from Pognenbin rode up to Bartek's house. They had expected serious resistance, for as many as five appeared with loaded revolvers. They were mistaken; Bartek had not thought of offering any resistance. They told him to get into the carriage, and he got in. Magda alone was desperate, persistently repeating:

"Oh dear, what did you fight those French for? You will catch it now, poor fellow, that you will!"

"Be quiet, stupid!" Bartek answered, and smiled quite cheerfully to the passers-by as he drove along.

"I'll show then who it is they have offended!" he cried from the carriage.

And, covered with his medals, he drove along to the trial like a conqueror.

As a matter of fact, the trial went in his favour. The judge decided to be lenient under the circumstances: Bartek was only condemned to three months' imprisonment.

In addition to this he had to pay a fine of one hundred and fifty marks to the Boege family and "other injured colonists."

"Nevertheless the prisoner," wrote the *Posener Zeitung* in the Criminal Report, "showed not the slightest sign of contrition when the sentence was passed on him, but poured forth such a stream of invective, and began to enumerate his so-called services to the State in such an impudent manner, that it is surprising these insults to the court and the German nation," etc., etc.

Meanwhile Bartek in prison quietly recalled his deeds at Gravelotte, Sedan, and Paris.

We should, however, be doing an injustice in asserting that Herr Boege's action called forth no public censure. Very much the reverse. On a certain rainy morning a Polish Member of Parliament pointed out with great eloquence that the attitude of the Government towards the Poles had altered in Poznań; that, considering the courage and sacrifice displayed by the Polish regiments during the war, it would be fitting to have more regard for justice in the Polish provinces; finally, that Herr Boege at Pognenbin had abused his position as school-master by beating a Polish child, calling it a Polish pig, and holding out hopes that after this war the incoming inhabitants would trample the native population under foot. The rain fell as the member was speaking, and as such weather makes people sleepy, the Conservatives yawned, the National Liberals yawned, the Centre yawned—for they were not yet being faced by the "Kulturkampf."

Following immediately on this "Polish question" the Chamber proceeded to the order of the day.

Meanwhile Bartek sat in prison, or rather, he lay in the prison infirmary, for the blow from the stone had reopened the wound which he had received in the war.

When not feverish, he thought and thought, like the turkey-cock that died of thinking. But Bartek did not die, he merely did not arrive at any conclusion.

Now and then, however, during moments, which science names *lucida intervalla*, it occurred to him that he had perhaps exerted himself unnecessarily in "doing for" the French.

Difficult times followed for Magda. The fine had to be paid, and there was nothing with which to pay it. The priest at Pognenbin offered to help, but it turned out that there were not quite forty marks in his money box. The parish of Pognenbin was poor; besides, the good old man never knew how his

money went. Count Jarzyński was not at home. It was said that he had gone love-making to some rich lady in the Kingdom.¹

Magda did not know where to turn.

An extension of the loan was not to be thought of. What else, then? Should she sell the horse or the cows? Meanwhile spring passed into summer, the hardest time of all. It would soon be harvest, when she would need money for extra labour, and even now it was all exhausted. The woman wrung her hands in despair. She sent a petition to the magistrate, recalling Bartek's services; she never even received an answer. The time for repayment of the loan was drawing near, and the sequestration with it.

She prayed and prayed, remembering bitterly the time when they were well off, and when Bartek used to earn money at the factory in winter. She tried to borrow money from her neighbours; they had none. The war had made itself felt all round. She did not dare to go to Just, because she was in his debt already, and had not even paid the interest. However, Just unexpectedly came to see her himself.

One afternoon she was sitting in the cottage doorway doing nothing, for despair had drained her strength. She was gazing before her at the golden flies chasing one another in the air, and thinking, "How happy those creatures are, they live for themselves and needn't pay"--and so on. After a while she sighed heavily, and a low cry broke from her pale lips: "Oh, God! God!" Suddenly at the gate appeared Just's long nose, and his long pipe beneath it. The woman turned pale. Just addressed her:

"*Morgen!*"

"How are you, Herr Just?"

"What about my money?"

"Oh, my dear Herr Just, have pity! I am very poor, and what am I to do? They have taken my man away, I have to pay the fine for him, and I don't know where to turn. It would be better to die than to be worried like this from day to day. Do wait a while longer, dear Herr Just!"

She burst out crying, and seizing Herr Just's fat, red hand, she kissed it humbly. "The Count will be back soon, then I will borrow from him, and give it back to you."

"Well, and how will you pay the fine?"

¹ The Kingdom of Poland: the part of Central Poland that when this story was written was under Russian domination.—M. M. G.

"How can I tell? I might sell the cow."

"Then I will lend you some more."

"May God Almighty repay you, my dear sir! Although you are a Lutheran, you are a good man. I speak the truth! If only other Germans were like you, sir, one might bless them."

"But I don't lend money without interest."

"I know, I know."

"Then write me one receipt for it all."

"You are a kind gentleman. May God repay you too in the same way."

"We will draw up the bill when I go into the town."

He went into the town and drew up the bill, but Magda had gone to the priest for advice beforehand. Yet what could he advise? The priest said he was very sorry for her; the time given for repayment was short, the interest was high. Count Jarzyński was not at home; had he been, he might have helped. Magda, however, could not wait until the team was sold, and she was obliged to accept Just's terms. She contracted a debt of three hundred marks, that is, twice the amount of the fine, for it was certainly necessary to have a few pence in the house to carry on the housekeeping. On account of the importance of the document, Bartek was obliged to sign it, and for this reason Magda went to see him in prison. The conqueror was very downtrodden, depressed, and ill. He had wished to forward a petition, setting forth his grievances, but petitions were not accepted; opinion in administrative circles had turned against him since the articles in the *Posener Zeitung*. For were not these very authorities bound to afford protection to the peaceful German population, who, during the recent war, had given so many proofs of devotion and sacrifice to the Fatherland? They were therefore obliged in fairness to reject Bartek's petition. But it is not surprising that this should have depressed him at last.

"We are done for all round," he said to his wife.

"All round," she repeated.

Bartek began to ruminate deeply on the circumstances.

"It's a cruel injustice to me," he said.

"That man Boege persecutes one," Magda replied. "I went to implore him, and he called me names too. Ah! the Germans have the upper hand now at Poguenbin. They aren't afraid of any one."

"Of course, for they are the strongest," Bartek said sadly.

"As I am a plain woman, I tell you God is the strongest."

"In Him is our refuge," added Bartek.

They were both silent a moment, then he asked again:

"Well, and what of Just?"

"If the Lord Almighty gives us a crop, then perhaps we shall be able to repay him. Possibly too the Count will help us, although he himself has debts with the German. They said even before the war that he would have to sell Pognenbin. Let us hope that he will bring home a rich wife."

"But will he be back soon?"

"Who knows? They say at the house that he will soon be coming with his wife. And directly he is back the Germans will be upon him. It's always those Germans! They are as plentiful as worms! Wherever one looks, whichever way one turns, whether in the village or the town—Germans for our sins! But where are we to get help from?"

"Perhaps you can decide on something, for you are a clever woman."

"What can I advise? Should I have borrowed money from Just if I could have helped it? I did it for a good reason, but now the cottage in which we are settled, and the land also, are already his. Just is better than other Germans, but he too has an eye to his own profit, not other people's. He won't be lenient to us any more than he has been lenient to others. I am not so stupid as not to know why he sticks his money in here! But what is one to do, what is one to do?" she cried, wringing her hands. "Give some advice yourself, if you are so clever. You can beat the French, but what will you do without a roof over your head, or a crust to eat?"

The victor of Gravelotte bent his head. "Oh, Jesu! Jesu!"

Magda had a kind heart; Bartek's grief touched her, so she said quickly:

"Never mind, dear boy, never mind. Don't worry your head about it till it has healed up. The rye is so fine, it's bending to the ground; the wheat the same. The ground doesn't belong to the Germans; it's as good as ever it was. The fields were in a bad state before your quarrel, but now they are growing so well, you'll see!"

Magda began to smile through her tears.

"The ground doesn't belong to the Germans," she repeated once more.

"Magda!" Bartek said, looking at her with wide-open eyes; "Magda!"

"What?"

"But—because you are . . . if . . ."

Bartek felt deep gratitude towards her, but he could not express it.

IX

IN truth Magda was worth more than ten other women put together. Her manner towards Bartek was rather curt, but she was really attached to him. In moments of excitement, as, for example, in the prison, she told him to his face that he was stupid; nevertheless, before other people she would generally exclaim: 'My Bartek pretends to be stupid, but that's his cunning.' She used frequently to say this. As a matter of fact Bartek was about as cunning as his horse, and without Magda he would have been unable to manage either his holding or anything else. Now, when everything rested on her honest shoulders, she left no stone unturned, running hither and thither to beg for help. A week after her last visit to the prison infirmary she ran in again to see Bartek, breathless, beaming, and happy.

"My word, Bartek, how are you?" she exclaimed gleefully. "Do you know the Count has arrived! He was married in the Kingdom; the young lady is a beauty! But he has done well for himself all round in getting her; fancy—just fancy!"

The owner of Pognenbin had really been married and come home with his wife, and had actually done very well by himself all round in finding her.

"Well, and what of that?" inquired Bartek.

"Be quiet, blockhead," Magda replied. "Oh! how out of breath I am! Oh, Jesu! I went to pay my respects to the lady. I looked at her: she came out to meet me like a queen, as young and charming as a flower, and as beautiful as the dawn!—Oh dear, how out of breath I am!"

Magda took her handkerchief, and began to wipe the perspiration from her face. The next instant she started talking again in a gasping voice:

"She had a blue dress like the cornflower. I fell at her feet, and she gave me her hand; I kissed it, and her hands are as sweet and tiny as a child's. She is just like a saint in a picture, and she is good, and feels for poor people. I began to beg her for help. May God give her health! And she said, 'I will do,'

she said, 'whatever lies in my power.' And she has such a pretty little voice that when she speaks one does feel pleased. So then I began to tell her that there are unhappy people in Pognenbin, and she said, 'Not only in Pognenbin,' and then I burst into tears, and she too. And then the Count came in, and he saw that she was crying, so he just went and took her and gave her a little kiss. 'Gentlefolk aren't like us' Then she said to him, 'Do what you can for this woman.' And he said, 'Anything in the world, whatever you wish.'—May the Mother of God bless her, that lovely creature, may She bless her with children and with health! The Count said at once: 'You must be heavily in debt, if you have fallen into the hands of the Germans, but,' he said, 'I will help you, and also against Just.'"

Bartek began to scratch his neck.

"But the Germans have got hold of him too."

"What of that? His wife is rich. They could buy all the Germans in Pognenbin now, so it was easy for him to talk like that. 'The election,' he said, 'is coming on before long, and people had better take care not to vote for Germans; but I will make short work of Just and Boege.' And the lady put her arm round his neck, and the Count asked after you, and said: 'If he is ill, I will speak to the doctor about giving him a certificate to show that he is unfit to be imprisoned now. If they don't let him off altogether,' he said, 'he will be imprisoned in the winter, but he is needed now for working the crops.' Do you hear? The Count was in the town yesterday, and invited the doctor to come on a visit to Pognenbin to-day. He's not a German. He'll write the certificate. In the winter you'll sit in prison like a king, you'll be warm, and they'll give you meat to eat; and now you are going home to work, and Just will be repaid, and possibly the Count won't want any interest, and if we can't give it all back in the autumn, I'll beg it from the lady. May the Mother of God bless her. . . . Do you hear?"

"She is a good lady. There are not many such!" Bartek said at once.

"You must fall at her feet, I tell you—but if you don't I'll twist your head for you! If only God grants us a crop! And do you see where the help has come from? Was it from the Germans? Did they give you a single penny for your stupid medals? Well, they just gave you a crack on your head and nothing more! Fall at the lady's feet, I say!"

"I can't do otherwise," Bartek replied resolutely.

Fortune seemed to smile on the conqueror once more. He was informed some days later that for reasons of health he would be released from prison until the winter. He was ordered to appear before the magistrate. The man who, bayonet in hand, had seized flags and guns, now began to fear a uniform more than death. A deep, unconscious feeling was growing in his mind that he was being persecuted, that they could do as they liked with him, and that there was some mighty, yet malevolent and evil power above him, which, if he resisted, would crush him. So there he stood before the magistrate, as formerly before Steinmetz, upright, his body drawn in, his chest thrown forward, not daring to breathe. There were some officers present also: they represented war and the military prison to Bartek. The officers looked at him through their gold eyeglasses with the pride and disdain befitting Prussian officers towards a private soldier and Polish peasant. He stood holding his breath, and the magistrate said something in a commanding tone. He did not ask or persuade, he commanded and threatened. A member had died in Berlin, and the writs for a fresh election had been issued.

"You Polish dog, just you dare to vote for Count Jarzynski, just you dare!"

At this the officers knitted their brows into threatening leonine wrinkles. One, lighting his cigar, repeated after the magistrate: "Just you dare!" and Bartek the Conqueror's heart died within him. When he heard the order given, "Go!" he made a half-turn to the left, went out, and took breath. They told him to vote for Herr Schulberg of Great Krzywda; he paid no attention to the command, but took a deep breath. For he was going to Pognenbin, he could be at home during harvest time, the Count had promised to pay Just. He walked out of the town; the ripening cornfields surrounded him on every side, the heavy blades hurtling one another in the wind, and murmuring with a sound dear to the peasant's ear. Bartek was still weak, but the sun warmed him. "Ah! how beautiful the world is!" this worn-out soldier thought.

It was not much farther to Pognenbin

X

"THE Election! The Election!"

Countess Marya Jarzyńska's head was full of it, and she thought, talked, and dreamt of nothing else.

"You are a great politician," an aristocratic neighbour said to her, kissing her small hands in a snake-like way. But the "great politician" blushed like a cherry, and answered with a beautiful smile:

"Oh, we only do what we can!"

"Count Józef will be elected," the nobleman said with conviction, and the "great politician" answered:

"I should wish it very much, though not alone for Józef's sake, but" (here the "great politician" crimsoned again with an "unpolitical" blush), "for the common cause. . . ."

"By God! A positive Bismarck!" cried the nobleman, kissing the tiny hands once more. After which they proceeded to discuss the canvassing. The nobleman himself undertook Krzywda Dolna and Mizerów (Great Krzywda was lost, for Herr Schulberg owned all the property there), and Countess Marya was to occupy herself specially with Pognenbin. She was all aglow with the role she was to fill, and she certainly lost no time. She was daily to be seen at the cottages on the main road, holding her skirt with one hand, her parasol with the other, while from under her skirt peeped her tiny feet, tripping enthusiastically in the great political cause. She went into the cottages; she said to the people working on the road, "God help you!" She visited the sick, made herself agreeable to the people, and helped where she could. She would have done the same without politics, for she had a kind heart, but she did it all the more on this political account. Why should not she also contribute her share to the political cause? But she did not dare confess to her husband that she had an irresistible desire to attend the village meeting. In imagination she had even planned the speech she would make at the meeting. And what a speech it would be! What a speech! True, she would certainly never dare to make it, but if she dared—why then! Consequently when the news reached Pognenbin that the authorities had prohibited the meeting, the "great politician" burst into a fit of anger, tore one handkerchief up completely, and had red eyes all day. In vain her husband begged her not to "demean" herself to such a degree; next day the canvassing

was carried on with still greater fervour. Nothing stopped Countess Marya now. She visited thirteen cottages in one day, and talked so loudly against the Germans that her husband was obliged to check her. But there was no danger. The people welcomed her gladly, they kissed her hands and smiled at her, for she was so pretty and her cheeks were so rosy that wherever she went she brought brightness with her. Thus she came to Bartek's cottage also. Lysek barked at her, but Magda in her excitement hit him on the head with a stick.

"Oh, lady, my beautiful lady, my dear lady!" cried Magda, seizing her hands.

In accordance with his resolve, Bartek threw himself at her feet, while little Franek first kissed her hand, then stuck his thumb into his mouth and lost himself in whole-hearted admiration.

"I hope"—the young lady said after the first greetings were over—"I hope, my friend Bartek, that you will vote for my husband, and not for Herr Schulberg."

"Oh, my dear lady!" Magda exclaimed; "who would vote for Schulberg? Give him the ten plagues! The lady must excuse me, but when one gets talking about the Germans, one can't help what one says."

"My husband has just told me that he will repay just."

"May God bless him!" Here Magda turned to Bartek. "Why do you stand there like a post? I must beg the lady's pardon, but he's wonderfully dumb."

"You will vote for my husband, won't you?" the lady asked. "You are Poles, and we are Poles, so we will hold to one another."

"I should throttle him if he didn't vote for him," Magda said. "Why do you stand there like a post? He's wonderfully dumb. Bestir yourself a bit!"

Bartek again kissed the lady's hand, but he remained silent, and looked as black as night. The magistrate was in his mind.

The day of the election drew near, and arrived. Count Jarzyński was certain of victory. All the neighbourhood assembled at Pognenbin. After voting the gentlemen returned there from the town to wait for the priest, who was to bring the news. Afterwards there was to be a dinner, but in the evening the noble couple were going to Poznań, and subsequently to Berlin also. Several villages in the electoral division had already polled the day beforehand. The result would be made known on this day. The company was in a cheerful frame of

mind. The young lady was slightly nervous, yet full of hope and smiles, and made such a charming hostess that every one agreed Count Józef had found a real treasure in the Kingdom. This treasure was quite unable at present to keep quiet in one place, and ran from guest to guest, asking each for the hundredth time to assure her that "Józio would be elected." She was not actually ambitious, and it was not out of vanity that she wished to be the wife of a member, but she was dreaming in her young mind that she and her husband together had a real mission to accomplish. So her heart beat as quickly as at the moment of her wedding, and her pretty little face was lighted up with joy. Skilfully manœuvring amidst her guests, she approached her husband, drew him by the sleeve, and whispered in his ear, like a child, nicknaming someone, "The Hon. Member!" He smiled, and both were happy beyond words. They both felt a great wish to give one another a warm embrace, but owing to the presence of their guests, this could not be. Every one, however, was looking out of the window every moment, for the question was a really important one. The former member, who had died, was a Pole, and this was the first time in this division that the Germans had put up a candidate of their own. Their military success had evidently given them courage, but just for that reason it the more concerned those assembled at the manor house at Pognenbin to secure the election of their candidate. Before dinner there was no lack of patriotic speeches, which especially moved the young hostess who was unaccustomed to them. Now and then she suffered an access of fear. Supposing there should be a mistake in counting the votes? But there would surely not only be Germans serving on the committee! The older landowners explained to the lady the method of counting the votes. She had heard this a hundred times, but she still wished to hear it! Ah! and would it not make all the difference whether the local population had an enemy in Parliament, or someone to champion their cause? It would soon be decided—in a short moment, in fact—for a cloud of dust was rising from the road.

"The priest is coming! The priest is coming!" reiterated those present. The lady grew pale. Excitement was visible on every face. They were certain of victory; all the same this final moment made their hearts beat more rapidly. But it was not the priest, it was the steward returning from the town on horseback. Perhaps he might know something? He tied his

horse to the gate post, and hurried to the house. The guests and the hostess rushed into the hall.

"Is there any news?—Is there any? Has our friend been elected?—What?—Come here!—Do you know for certain?—Has the result been declared?"

The questions rose and fell like rockets, but the man threw his cap into the air.

"The Count is elected!"

The lady sat down on a bench abruptly, and pressed her hand to her fast-beating heart.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" the neighbour shouted. "Hurrah!"

The servants rushed out from the kitchen.

"Hurrah! Down with the Germans! Long live the member! And my lady the member's wife!"

"But the priest?" someone asked

"He will be here directly," the steward answered; "they are still counting. . . ."

"Let us have dinner!" the hon. member cried

"Hurrah!" several people repeated.

They all walked back again from the hall to the drawing-room. Congratulations to the host and hostess were now offered more calmly, the lady herself, however, did not know how to restrain her joy, and disregarding the presence of others, threw her arm round her husband's neck. But they thought none the worse of her for this; on the contrary, they were all much touched

"Well, we still survive!" the neighbour from Mizerów said.

At this moment there was a clatter along the corridor, and the priest entered the drawing-room, followed by old Maciej of Pogonibin.

"Welcome! Welcome!" they all cried. "Well—what majority?"

The priest was silent a moment; then as it were into the very face of this universal joy he suddenly hurled the two harsh, brief words:

"Schulberg—elected!"

A moment of astonishment followed, a volley of hurried and anxious questions, to which the priest again replied:

"Schulberg is elected!"

"How?—What has happened?—By what means?—The steward said it was not so.—What has happened?"

Meanwhile Count Jarzyński was leading poor Countess

Marya out of the room, who was biting her handkerchief so as not to burst into tears or to faint.

"Oh, what a misfortune, what a misfortune!" the assembled guests repeated, striking their foreheads.

A dull sound like people shouting for joy rose at that moment from the direction of the village. The Germans of Pognenbin were thus gleefully celebrating their victory.

Count and Countess Jarzyński returned to the drawing-room. He could be heard saying to his wife at the door, "*Il faut faire bonne mine*," and she had stopped crying already. Her eyes were dry and very red.

"Will you tell us how it was?" the host asked quietly.

"How could it be otherwise, sir," old Maciej said, "seeing that even the Pognenbin peasants voted for Schulberg?"

"Who did so?"

"What? Those here?"

"Why, yes; I myself and every one saw Bartek Slowik vote for Schulberg."

"Bartek Slowik?" the lady said.

"Why, yes. The others are at him now for it. The man is rolling on the ground, howling, and his wife is scolding him. But I myself saw how he voted."

"From such an enlightened village!" the neighbour from Mizerów said.

"You see, sir," Maciej said, "others who were in the war also voted as he did. They say that they were ordered——"

"That's cheating, pure cheating! The election is void—Compulsion!—Swindling!" cried different voices.

The dinner at the Pognenbin manor house was not cheerful that day.

The host and hostess left in the evening, but not as yet for Berlin, only for Dresden.

Meanwhile Bartek sat in his cottage, miserable, sworn at, ill-treated and hated, a stranger even to his own wife, for even she had not spoken a word to him all day.

In the autumn God granted a crop, and Herr Just, who had just come into possession of Bartek's farm, felt pleased, for he had not done at all a bad stroke of business.

Some months later three people walked out of Pognenbin to the town, a peasant, his wife, and child. The peasant was very bent, more like an old man than an able-bodied one. They were going to the town because they could not find work at Pognenbin.

It was raining. The woman was sobbing bitterly at losing her cottage, and her native place. The peasant was silent. The road was empty, there was not a cart, not a human being to be seen; the cross alone, wet from the rain, stretched its arms above them. The rain fell more and more heavily, dimming the light.

Bartek, Magda, and Franek were going to the town because the victor of Gravelotte and Sedan had to serve his term of imprisonment during the winter, on account of the affair with Boege.

Count and Countess Jarzyński continued to live in Dresden.

THE THIRD WOMAN

Translated by S. C. DE SOISSONS

I

THE studio which served as workroom and bedchamber for myself and Światecki was not paid for. As to the reasons for this, there were two: first, our common funds amounted to about five roubles; second, we strenuously objected to the paying of rent—as a matter of principle. We painters are called spendthrifts. I prefer to spend my money in drinks rather than turn it over to a landlord. Ours was not a bad fellow after all; and, besides, we knew a trick or two that worked splendidly. As soon as, bent on collection, he made his appearance, which usually happened early in the morning, Światecki half rose from his bed— a straw mattress spread on the floor, with a Turkish *portière* for a quilt—and in a hoarse graveyard voice uttered his greeting

“I am very glad to see you—very glad. I dreamed last night that you were dead.”

Now our landlord was a superstitious man, ridiculously afraid of death. Światecki’s words usually had the desired effect. To make it complete, Światecki stretched himself at full length, crossed his hands over his breast, and in the same graveyard voice continued:

“You were lying, as I am now, stiff and motionless. You had white gloves on your long fingers, and patent leather shoes on your feet. Otherwise you were not changed.”

To which I reassuringly added:

“Dreams sometimes come true.”

This “sometimes” would set the landlord wild with rage. He would then slam the door behind him and rush downstairs like a madman. And yet the good soul could never make up his mind to send the bailiff in. Doubtless he was well aware that there was not much to take. He might have also considered that, were the premises leased to other artists, he would have fared little better, if not indeed worse. At last, however, our trick lost its effect. He somehow got used to our dreams of

his early death. To get even with him again Światecki decided on three new paintings, to be entitled respectively: "Death," "The Last Toilet," and "The Awakening from a Trance." Naturally, our landlord was to be the central figure in all three. Such macabre paintings were Światecki's speciality. He painted large macabres, small, and some of medium size. That was the reason, I am afraid, why no one ever bought his pictures. He had talent, though.

He had sent two of his macabres to the Salon at Paris, while I sent my "Jews on the Shores of the Vistula," which the catalogue baptized "The Jews by the River of Babylon."

We both awaited the verdict of the jury with the greatest impatience. Of course Światecki knew beforehand that everything would result most disastrously. "The jury is composed of rank idiots," he declared, "and if such is not the case, then you are an idiot, and I am ditto: our pictures are idiotically painted, and their success would mean the crowning of idiocy!"

How much that fellow embittered my life during the two years we lived together will never be known. His highest ambition was to be considered morally macabre -- size extra large. He loved to play the drunkard, though he was very far from being one. He would swallow one or two harmless drinks, eager to be caught in the act. If not certain that he was observed, he jabbed one or the other of us with his elbow, saying: "I am going under fast, eh?"

He was promptly made to understand that he was a — silly chump. This enraged him. Nothing aggravated him more than our doubts of his degeneracy. For all that he was a real good fellow.

We once lost ourselves in the Salzkammergut Mountains, near Zell-am-See. As the night crept in upon us, and we were in danger of breaking our necks, Światecki suddenly made the following proposition:

"Listen, Wladek; you have the bigger talent and the world can ill afford to lose you. I will go down first. If I fall, you stay where you are until the morning. You may be able to get out of this then."

"You will not go," I said; "I will venture myself: I have better eyes."

To which Światecki coolly replied:

"If I don't break my neck to-night, I will surely end in a ditch some other time. It's all the same to me, you know."

While we quarrelled it grew dark. We decided to draw lots. Świątecki pulled the short straw and stepped forward.

We moved very slowly; at first the road was tolerably wide, then it gradually grew narrower. As far as we could make out there were precipices on both sides of us.

"I am crawling on all fours," came suddenly from Świątecki. "It won't do any other way."

I silently followed suit, and for some time we travelled like a pair of chimpanzees. Soon we noticed that this was also becoming difficult. The stony ridge was no bigger than a saddle. Świątecki sat down astride of it, I beside him.

After a short pause I heard Świątecki's voice: "Wladek!"

"Well?"

"The ridge is at an end."

"What is next?"

"Next comes a precipice."

"Take a stone and throw it down. Listen how far it will go."

I heard Świątecki feeling for a stone in the darkness, then his warning:

"Look out; there goes one!"

We both listened— not a sound.

"Have you heard anything?"

"Nothing!"

"We are lost. It must be about a hundred feet deep."

"Throw again!"

Świątecki found another stone and dropped it. No echo.

"The devil! is there no bottom down below?" exclaimed he.

"It's no use! we must stay where we are till dawn."

We made up our minds to do so. Świątecki threw some more stones. All in vain. An hour passed by, and yet another. Suddenly I heard Świątecki whisper:

"Wladek, don't you fall asleep! Have you any cigarettes?"

An investigation proved that I had cigarettes, but not a match could be found on either of us.

It must have been about midnight, when a fine drizzling rain added to our misery. All around us reigned Egyptian darkness. It was so still that I could almost hear the blood circulate in my veins, while the throbbing of my heart was perfectly distinct.

At first the whole situation interested me greatly. In a pitch-dark night, over a deep precipice, astride of a rock—what better adventure could any one desire? But soon it grew cold, and besides, Świątecki began one of his philosophical tirades:

"What is life? Life is simply pig's play. They talk of art! Art indeed! Pshaw! Art is pure ape-like imitation of Nature, and above all a rascality. I have been at the Salon twice. They have sent in there so many paintings that from the canvas you could make straw mattresses for all the Jews in the world. And what was it all? A speculation to stuff the pocket and the stomach. An anarchism of art, nothing else! If Art, true Art, were present, it would die of a broken heart. Fortunately there is no real Art in this world—there is only Nature. Probably Nature herself is also a piece of hoggishness. The best thing would be to jump right down now and make an end of it. I would do it if I only had some liquor. I haven't, so I leave it for some better occasion. I solemnly swore not to die sober."

Accustomed as I was to Świątecki's chatter, at that moment, in the cold, impenetrable darkness and unnatural silence of the night, his grim philosophy made me feel gloomy. Luckily, he was played out and stopped. Once more he picked up a few stones and dropped them, repeating several times, "No sound," and then we were both silent for hours. At last it looked as if dawn were approaching. We suddenly heard the crowing of what I supposed were eagles, and the flapping of wings. It was still very dark. I could see nothing in front of me. The crowing grew louder, and I was surprised at the number of voices; just as if an army of eagles were holding a meeting over our heads. They were, however, the unmistakable heralds of the coming day. Little by little I could see the contours of my hands, then Świątecki's broad shoulders. They loomed in front of me, as any dark object might on a little higher ground. This ground became gradually more visible. A silvery white tint passed, glimmering over the cliffs and after a while took in Świątecki's shoulders. It pierced the darkness, and tore it into fragments, as if it were transforming it from black to grey, from grey to creamy white. Light seemed to pour in from everywhere. I felt a dampness all around me; everything, the rock, the ground, even the air was filled with moisture.

I look closely, and try to take in all these changes in colour and picture them in my imagination. Suddenly I am interrupted by Świątecki's exclamation:

"Phew, we asses!" Next moment he disappears.

"Świątecki!" I call. "What are you about?"

"Don't cry out—look!"

I lean over, and what do I see? I am seated on a rock not

more than a foot over and above a green mossy meadow. The moss must have robbed the stones of their sound, as the meadow is as flat as a carpet. Not far on the road may be seen a flock of crows, which I foolishly took for eagles.

Nothing could be easier than to get up and walk home: all we had to do was to lower our legs. And there we were sitting, as if chained, the whole night long, shivering with cold. I hardly know why I recalled this incident, which happened nearly a year and a half ago, just now, when we dreaded the visit of our landlord. It had a certain cheering, consoling element in it, though, and I said to Świątecki:

"Do you remember, Antek, how we supposed ourselves sitting on the edge of an abyss, which proved to be a straight, level path? It may end the same way now. Though we are as poor as church rats, with the landlord all but ready to evict us, everything may take a new turn. May a mine of gold and silver open for us!"

Świątecki was sitting on his straw mattress, pulling on one of his boots, and murmuring that life was nothing but a monotonous process of pulling on of boots in the morning, and taking them off again at bed-time; that the man is clever who has the grit to hang himself - a thing, he, Świątecki, would do himself were he not as much of a coward as a fool. My good humoured speech interrupted him. He looked at me for some time with his fishy eyes, and said:

"You, more than any one else, have sufficient reason to feel happy. The day before yesterday Mr. Suskowski banished you from his house and from his daughter's heart, and to-day, probably, the landlord will turn us out of the studio."

Świątecki's words were true. Only as lately as three days ago I was betrothed to Miss Kazia Susłowska, and on Tuesday - yes, Tuesday! - on Tuesday morning her father sent me the following epistle:

DEAR SIR, - Our daughter, obedient to the counsel of her parents, consents to sever a tie which would have proved unfortunate for her. She would always find a refuge on the bosom of her mother and under the roof of her father, yet it is for the parents to prevent such extreme possibilities. Not only your financial condition, but your frivolous character, which you, with all your endeavours, could not keep secret, induce us and our daughter to release you from your word and end all further relations, without, however, lessening in any degree or manner our good-will towards you.

Respectfully,

HEŁODOR SUSŁOWSKI,

Representative of the late Treasury Commission of the K.P.

That is the letter. I fully agree that with my finances you could not tempt a dog to house with me; but what this sentimental monkey wants with my character I cannot perceive. Kazia's head reminds me of a type in the days of the Directory. She would look much better if she dressed her hair in the style of that period. I made a vain effort once to ask her to do so. She doesn't understand such things. Yet her complexion is as full of warmth as if she had jumped down from a canvas by Fortuni. That is the reason I loved her so well, and also why the first day after reading her father's note I went about like a doomed man. Only on the evening of the second day did I feel relieved, as I said to myself: "*Not is not!*"

What helped me most to forget the blow was the fact that my head was filled with the Salon and with my Jews. I was satisfied that it was a real good picture, although Świątecki prophesied that it would not be admitted even so far as the ante chamber of the Salon.

It was a year ago that I began work on it, and in the following way: One evening walking along the Vistula I saw a basket of fruit, broken and adrift in the river; street urchins were fishing the apples out of the water, and on the shore a whole Jewish family were sitting filled with such despair that they did not even weep. They were silently wringing their hands and staring at the water as mute as statues. There was an old Jew, a veritable patriarch—sorrow personified; an old Jewess; a young Jew, as big as Maccabæus; a young girl, freckle-faced but of strong features, especially the nose and mouth; and then two small Jewish children. It was getting dark. The river showed bronze-like reflections—simply marvellous. The trees of the Saxon island were all saturated by the evening light—farther down the water there were beautiful tints, purple red, ultra-marine, shades almost steel, shading off into purple and violet. The air perspectives—excellent! And the movement, the changing of colour into colour, was so indescribable, so startling, that one's soul throbbed within one from joy! All around was still, shining, quiet. Over the whole such melancholy was spread that one wanted to scream, to yell; and this whole group sunk in mourning just as if they all, from the smallest to the biggest, were posing as models in a studio. As a flash of lightning the thought came into my head: "Here you have your picture!"

I had with me my painter's box, without which I never go out, and began to sketch at once. Before that I said to the Jews:

"Sit still as you are, and don't move! I will pay one rouble each, when the evening comes."

The Jews understood at once what my game was, and sat as if rooted in the ground. I sketched and sketched right on. The street urchins got out of the water and I heard them sing behind me:

See the painter fine,
And what he steals, he says "It's mine."

But I answered them in their own slang and won them over to such an extent that they stopped throwing pieces of wood at the Jews, so as not to disturb me at my work. But my group unexpectedly became of merry mood.

"Jews," I exclaimed, "mourn!"

And the old woman replied:

"With your permission, Mr. Painter, what have we got to mourn for, when you promise to pay each of us a rouble? May we mourn who earns nothing!"

I was obliged to threaten them with non-payment. Thus I sketched away for two evenings. Then they sat for me in my studio for two months. Let Świątecki say what he pleases, the picture is good, it is not cold—it is all truth and nature. Even the freckles I left on the young Jewess. The faces might have been a little more attractive, but never more realistic or characteristic.

My mind was so absorbed with this picture that I endured the loss of Kazia more easily. When Świątecki recalled her to me, it seemed as if the affair had a whole eternity behind it.

Meanwhile Świątecki pulled on his other boot, and I busied myself about the samovar. Old Antoniowa brought in the breakfast cakes. It was the same old Antoniowa whom Świątecki had vainly tried to persuade for a long year to hang herself. We sat down by the samovar.

"Why are you so happy to-day?" asks Świątecki gruffly.

"How should I know! You will see something extraordinary happen to-day." At the same moment we hear steps on the stairs leading to the studio.

"The landlord! There is your *extraordinary*!" says Świątecki. He swallows his tea at a gulp, tears spring to his eyes, he gets hurriedly up, and hides in the studio behind the costumes, whence with a choked voice he calls out: "You, my dear: he loves you intensely—you speak to him."

"He is dreaming of you!" say I, hurrying to the same hiding-place. "You deal with him."

The door opens, and who steps in? Not the landlord, but the porter of the house in which the Suslowskis reside. We run out from our hiding-places.

"A letter for you," declares the porter.

I take the letter. By Jove! From Kazia! I tear the envelope and read the following:

I have the assurance that my parents will forgive us. Come immediately, regardless of the early hour. We are just coming back from the pump-room in the Saxon gardens.

K.

I have not got the least idea what her parents have to forgive me for, but have no time to ponder over it, as I lose my head from bewilderment. Only after a short pause I hand the letter to Świątecki and say to the porter:

"Dear friend! Tell the fair lady that I will come immediately. Hold on—I have no small change, but here are three roubles (the very last ones). Change them, keep one for yourself, and bring me back the other two.' (Incidentally, I may say that the rascal has never shown up again. The monster knew very well that I would make no scene about it in Suslowski's house, and took advantage of the opportunity most shamelessly. But at the moment I hardly noticed it.)

"Well, what do you say to that?" I asked Świątecki.

"Nothing! Every ox finds its slaughterhouse!"

The haste in which I dressed myself gave me no chance to think of a suitable reply that would avenge Świątecki's insult.

II

FIFTEEN minutes later I ring the bell at Suslowski's. Kazia herself opens the door to me. She is charming. She breathes the warmth of recent sleep, and she has brought along with her from the garden, in the folds of her light-blue calico dress, the freshness of the morning. Her hat, which she has just taken off, has dishevelled her hair a little. Her face is laughing; her eyes are laughing; her moist lips are laughing: the spring morning itself! I grasp her hand; I begin to cover her arm with kisses up to the very elbow. She bends to my ear and whispers:

"Well, who knows best how to love?"

Then she takes my hand and leads me to her parents. Old Suslowski looks like a Roman who sacrifices his child for his country's sake. The mother, at breakfast, mixes tears with her coffee. They rise at our entrance, and Papa Suslowski says:

"Sense and duty compel me to say 'no,' but a father's heart has its rights—if it is a weakness, may God judge me for it!"

He lifts his eyes to signify that he is ready to give his account, should the Court of Heaven draw up the indictment, at this very moment. In all my life I have never seen anything more Roman, with the exception, perhaps, of the salami and macaroni they sell on the Corso. The moment is so solemn that a hippopotamus might melt with emotion. The solemnity of the situation is increased by Mrs. Suslowska, who stretches out her hands, and with a voice full of tears, says:

"My children, should you ever in your life meet with misfortune, come, take refuge here—here!"

And with these words she points to her bosom. 'This is the last straw! I would have been very stupid indeed to look for protection! Yet did such a proposition come from Kazia, it might be different. With all that, the devotion of the old people surprises me, and my heart is full of gratitude. From sheer sentiment I drink one cup of coffee after another, so that Suslowski uneasily looks at the coffee machine and the cream-pot. Kazia keeps pouring diligently into my cup, while I make efforts to touch her little foot under the table. She draws it back and shakes her head, smiling so enchantingly that it is hardly clear to me why I don't jump out of my skin. I remain there another hour, but make up my mind to go after all, as Bobuś is surely waiting for me in the studio. It is the same Bobuś to whom I give drawing lessons; who always leaves his visiting card with a coat of arms stamped on it, which I always lose. Kazia and her mother escort me to the ante-chamber, which irritates me, as I want to be alone with Kazia. What lips this girl has!

My way takes me through the garden. Crowds are returning from the pump-room. I observe that at sight of me most of them pause. I hear them whisper:

"Magórski—Magórski—that is he!"

Young girls, whose wonderful figures show through summer dresses of all possible colours, cast looks at me that seem to say, "Come over! We are ready!" What the devil! Am I so famous, then? I cannot make it out. I proceed—always the same story. On the stairs leading to my studio I run into my land-

lord, as a ship on to a rock. Oh, misery. The rent! Meanwhile he comes nearer and says:

"My dear sir, you will believe that although I have bothered you at times, I would for you—yes, allow me, dear sir——" After which he throws his arms about my neck. Ha! I see: Świątecki must have told him that I am going to get married, and he hopes to get his rent regularly from me now. Let him believe it. I rush upstairs. On the stairs I hear a great hubbub. I jump in. The studio is dark with smoke. There is Julek Rzyński, Wach Poterkiewicz, Franek Cepkowski, old Sludecki, Karimiński, Wojtek Michalak—all amusing themselves by throwing about the elegant and plump Bobuś. As soon as they see me, they drop him in the middle of the studio, scarcely alive, and immediately raise pandemonium.

"Congratulations! Congratulations! Congratulations! In the air with him!"

In a moment they have me in their arms, and throw me up several times, screeching like monkeys all the while. At last I am on the floor. I thank them and promise to invite them all to my wedding, especially Świątecki, whom I choose as my best man.

Świątecki raises his hands and says:

"The chump thinks we are congratulating him on his engagement."

"On what, then?"

"What! You know nothing?" several voices inquire.

"I know nothing. What the devil do you want?"

"Give him the *Paper Kite*--the morning issue of the *Paper Kite*!" cries Poterkiewicz.

They hand me the last issue of the *Paper Kite* and exclaim, one interrupting the other: "Read the telegrams!"

I do so, and find the following: "Special telegram to the *Paper Kite*":

Magórski's painting, "The Jews on the River of Babylon," has been awarded the great gold medal of this year's Salon. The critics cannot find words sufficient to praise the genius of the master. Albert Wolff calls the painting a revelation. Baron Hirsch offers fifteen thousand francs.

I feel like fainting! Save me! My senses are benumbed. I cannot utter a syllable. I knew that the picture was a success, but of such a success I never dreamed!

The *Paper Kite* drops from my hands. They pick it up and read from the "latest news" the following comments on the telegram:

We are informed by the master himself that he intends to exhibit his picture in our beautiful city.

To the question of the Vice-president of the local Fine Arts Association, whether it was his intention to exhibit his grand creation in Warsaw, the master replied: "I would rather my picture were not sold in Paris than not exhibited in Warsaw." We hope that these words may be read by future generations on the tombstone of the master, though we trust Heaven will postpone that event as long as possible.

The mother of the master, owing to the excitement incident upon reading the telegrams from Paris, became seriously ill.

At the time we go to press, we learn that the condition of the master's mother is much improved.

The master is in receipt of telegrams from all the capitals of Europe, inviting him to exhibit his picture in their respective cities

From the stunning effects of these monstrous lies I regain my senses little by little. Ostrzyński, the editor of the *Paper Kite* and the ex-admirer of Kazia, seems to have lost his senses, for the thing is terribly overdone. It is understood, of course, that I shall exhibit my picture in Warsaw, but I have not spoken a word to anybody about it; the Vice-president of the Fine Arts Association has put no question to me, and I have made no reply; my mother has been dead these nine years; and lastly, I have received no invitation from anywhere to exhibit my picture. But at the same time the idea strikes me: What if the dispatch is as true as the five comments: or perhaps Ostrzyński, who was refused by Kazia only half a year ago, although her parents were on his side, wishes to make a fool of me? Then he will have to pay me for it, "with his head or something else in that line," as you may read in the libretto of certain operas. My comrades quiet me with the assurance that, manufactured by Ostrzyński as the comments may be, the original telegram must be genuine.

Just then Stach Klosowicz brings in the morning *Aquator*. It also contains the telegram. I breathe more easily. Congratulations are in order now. Old Sludecki, hypocrisy itself, and in words sweet as honey, shakes my hand and says:

"By Jove! I have always believed in your genius, and have always defended you, dear comrade" (I know that he always calls me an ass). "Probably you may object, dear comrade

that such a Fa-presto as myself should call you 'comrade.' If such is the case, then pardon me, dear comrade—it comes from sheer habit."

In my inmost soul I send him to the devil, but before I can answer, Karmiński pulls me aside and whispers, yet loud enough for every one to hear:

"Dear comrade, should you need any money, then speak just a word to me and I will——"

Karmiński is known in our circle for his readiness to accommodate. Very often he has said to one of us: "Comrade, when you are in financial straits, then come to me and I will — I will see you again!" And yet he is rich. I answer him that if I fail to get money elsewhere I will come to him.

Meanwhile other friends come in—souls true as gold—and almost choke me with their embraces. At last Świątecki approaches me—I see that he is touched, although he tries to conceal it—and says harshly, "Although I see you are judaized, I congratulate you!"

"Although I see you are getting foolish, I thank you!" I answer, and we embrace heartily.

Wach Poterkiewicz mentions, with others, that his throat is dry and parched. I have not a copper, but Świątecki has two roubles, and the others have something between them, so a collection follows, then punch. They drink my health, throw me up in the air, and after they learn that the Susłowski affair is again settled, they drink to the health of my Kazia. Then up comes Świątecki and says:

"Do you believe, you baby, that they had not read the telegram before the young lady wrote to you?"

I feel as if I have been struck a blow on the head! While on one side the horizon was becoming brighter, it darkens devilishly on the other. Anything could be expected from the parents; but that Kazia should be capable of such diplomacy! It looks very probable, though, that they read the telegram this morning while in the pump-room, and therefore summoned me at once. My first impulse is to run to Susłowski and find out the truth, but I cannot leave my company. Besides, here comes Ostrzyński, elegant, cool, self-confident, gloved as usual. Cleverness coruscates from him as flames flow from a furnace—a shrewd, sly fellow! While yet on the threshold he condescendingly waves his cane and says:

"I congratulate you, master, I congratulate you!" This

"I" he emphasizes, as if his congratulations mean decidedly more than those of the rest. Probably they do.

"What an invention!" I exclaim. "As you see me alive, I first learned about myself from the *Paper Kite*."

"What do I care?" asks Ostrzyński.

"Nor have I said anything about exhibiting the picture, either."

"But you do now!" coolly says Ostrzyński.

"He has no mother, and his mother is not sick," cries Wojtek Michalak.

"Bothers me still less," repeats Ostrzyński with dignity, pulling off his second glove.

"But the telegram at least—is that true?"

"Certainly!"

This sets me fully at rest.

Out of gratitude I hand him some punch. He raises the glass to his lips, drinks, and then says, "First your health, and—do you know whose health I will drink next? I congratulate you doubly."

"How do you know it?"

Ostrzyński shrugs his shoulders.

"Suslowski was in the editorial rooms early this morning."

Światecki murmurs something about meanness in general. I cannot control myself any longer; I seize my hat. Ostrzyński follows me. I leave him on the way, and in a few minutes I ring for the second time at Suslowski's.

Again Kazia opens the door—her parents are not in. "Kazia!" I say sternly, "you knew of the telegram!"

"Of course!" she calmly replies.

"But, Kazia?"

"What, then, my dear? You cannot wonder at my parents. They had to have some good grounds for again giving their consent."

"But you, Kazia?"

"And I took advantage of the first opportunity. Can you blame me for it, Wladek?"

Matters become clearer, and it seems to me that Kazia is perfectly right. Why in the name of sense did I rush up like a madman? Meanwhile Kazia puts her head on my shoulder. I half embrace her; she lays her head on my shoulder, closes her eyes, brings her rosy lips closer to me, and whispers:

"No, no, not now, Wladek; only after our wedding, I beg you!"

But I press my lips to hers in breathless happiness. Kazia's eyes have a dreamy, far-away look. She covers them with her hands, and says:

"I begged you so hard that you would not——"

The reproach and the glance from under her hand move me to such an extent that I kiss her a second time. When we love someone, we naturally have more desire to kiss than to strike that person. And I love Kazia beyond measure and sense—for life, till death, and after that! She or none—that settles it!

Kazia hints, with a half-suppressed voice, her fear that she has lost my respect.

Dearest creature! What rubbish she talks! I calm her as well as I can, and we begin to talk sensibly. It is decided between us that if her parents assert that they only learned of the telegram later, I will pretend to be ignorant of the real facts. Then I take leave of Kazia, and promise to come again in the evening. I must hurry to the office of the Fine Arts Association, through whose help I shall be able to communicate with the management of the Salon.

III

I SEND a dispatch to say that I am satisfied with the sum offered by Baron Hirsch, but that I intend first to exhibit the picture in Warsaw, etc. I borrow the money for the sending of the telegrams and other expenses at the Fine Arts Association. I get it without trouble: everything goes as smooth as velvet. In the *Paper Kite* and *Aquator* new biographies are published, which, however, have not a word of truth in them; but as Ostrzyński puts it: "What do I care?" I receive propositions from the illustrated magazines. They want my photo, also a reproduction of my painting. So far, so good. There will be money in abundance!

A week later I receive the first instalment from Baron Hirsch, the whole sum to be paid as soon as the purchaser is in possession of the canvas. I get my five thousand francs from the Commercial Bank in louis d'or. As long as I have lived I have never seen so much gold at one time. I return, loaded like a donkey. There is a crowd in my studio. I scatter my louis d'or on the floor, and as I have never rolled in gold before, I begin to do it now. Świątecki follows suit. The landlord comes in and seriously believes we have gone mad. We amuse ourselves in real barbarian fashion.

IV

ONE day Ostrzyński tells me he is pleased to have been refused by Kazia, as there are prospects before him, the nature of which I can scarcely imagine. I am very glad, or rather I don't care. One thing is certain, Ostrzyński knows how to get along in this world. When he was after Kazia, her parents, especially Father Suslowski, were on his side. He exercised over the old gentleman such an influence that that Roman lost his usual gravity of demeanour in his presence. Against this, however, Kazia could not tolerate him from the first moment she saw him. It was a sort of instinctive abhorrence, for I am positive he was not objectionable to her for the same reasons that we, who knew him well, took a dislike to him. He is a strange man, or rather, he is a strange "literary man." There are, probably, not only in our midst, but also in all important centres of art and literature, men before whom we are unwillingly puzzled, knowing not whence they obtain their power.

To this class belongs my friend of the *Paper Kite*. Who would believe that the secret of Ostrzyński's importance, and the cause of his spiritual existence, is solely founded on the fact that he neither honours nor respects talent, especially literary talent—in short, that he lives by degrading it? He cherishes for it the contempt of a man to whom perfect "correctness," a certain telling cleverness, and a knowledge of social life, secure the road to victory. He must be seen at public meetings, at artistic and literary gatherings, at jubilee banquets. With what sarcasm he treats people who in the creative field amount to ten times as much as he; how he crushes them to the wall; how he confuses them with his logic, with his knowledge; how he rides on their shoulders with his literary importance! Świacki never thinks of that without calling for a cudgel to lay Ostrzyński's skull open.

I am not astonished at Ostrzyński's fine airs. People of real talent are frequently slow, shy, deficient in the art of repartee and mental balance. As soon as true talent is left to itself, however, it takes wings; Ostrzyński, under such circumstances, would quietly take a nap. The future will restore order among such people, establish ranks, and assign to each one his proper place. Ostrzyński is far-seeing enough to understand this, but inwardly he ridicules it. It is sufficient to him that for the moment he is somebody, and that he is more thought of than a good many others to whom, in regard to talent, he cannot hold

a candle. We painters are less in his way. Still, from time to time, he will even write a puff, but only in cases where the interests of the *Paper Kite* or the competition of the *Aquator* demand it. With all that, he is a good comrade and quite the gentleman. I may even say that I like him, but—to the devil with Ostrzyński! Enough of him!

V

SOME day I shall be compelled to bang the door behind me. What a comedy! Ever since I have gained fame and money, Suslowski, contrary to all my expectations, treats me with contempt. Himself, his wife, all the male and female relatives of Kazia, meet me coldly. On the very first evening, Suslowski declared that in case I believed my new position to have influenced his conduct, or if I supposed—which I seemed to presume—that I am doing the family a favour, he must announce that, no matter how much he and his wife are ready to make a sacrifice for the happiness of their child, this child must never demand that they should place on the altar of parental love their human dignity. The mother added that “her child” knew where to seek refuge in all circumstances. The brave Kazia defends me, sometimes even showing her temper, yet her parents are wide awake for every word of mine. As soon as I open my mouth, Suslowski bites his lips, looks at his wife, and nods, as if wishing to say, “I knew this would be the outcome.” So they sit upon me from morning till evening!

And all this is simple hypocrisy, with the main object of entangling me in their net! For at the bottom of the whole affair are the fifteen thousand francs, for which they are not less anxious than myself, although for different reasons. This thing must be settled. They have brought it so far, that it almost seems to me I have committed a crime in winning the gold medal and fifteen thousand francs.

VI

THE day of our formal betrothal is at hand. I have bought a magnificent ring in the style of Louis XV, which fails to please Kazia or her parents. Not one of the household has the least idea of real art. I must labour a good deal yet at Kazia to annihilate in her all her cheap vulgar instincts and tastes, and teach her to feel artistically. She loves me, however, and I

hope for the best. To the betrothal I have invited no one except Świątecki. I insist on his making a preliminary visit to the Susłowski's, which he refuses to do, asserting that though he is a moral and physical bankrupt, he is, however, not sunk so low as to make visits. A hard nut, this! I must inform Susłowski in advance, that my friend is an extraordinary original type, but withal a genius in his calling, and a real honest fellow. Having been informed that Świątecki painted medium, small, and large macabres, Susłowski raises his eyebrows and announces that he has always dealt with honest people, his whole official career has been spotless, and he therefore dares to hope that Mr. Świątecki will know how to respect the hospitality of an honourable house. I admit, though, in this regard, that I am not free from fears, and am struggling with Świątecki from break of day. He stubbornly insists on wearing leggings. I implore, I beg, I entreat. He yields at last, declaring that, after all, he sees no reason why he should not make a fool of himself. Unfortunately, his shoes remind one of the foot-gear of the explorers of Central Africa. They lost their blacking soon after he fetched them home from the shoemaker—on credit. But this cannot be helped! What's worse, Świątecki's head looks like the pinnacle of a forest-covered mountain, through which the gale has blown fiercely. There is no remedy for it, as in the whole wide world there is hardly a comb strong enough to battle with his curls. I compel Świątecki to exchange his everyday blouse for a frock coat, in which he resembles one of his own macabre figures, and immediately he falls into a "graveyard" mood. In the street people stare at his stick covered with knobs, and at his gigantic shabby hat. But I am accustomed to this.

We ring the bell. We enter.

In the antechamber I recognize the voice of cousin Jaczkowicz, who is discoursing on over-population. This is his pet theme—in fact it is his whole stock of wisdom. Kazia in her muslin dress looks like a cloudlet—simply stunning! Susłowski is in a frock coat, the male relatives are also in frock coats, the old aunts are in silk dresses.

Świątecki's entrance makes an impression. Uneasy glances follow us. Świątecki looks gloomily at himself and says to Papa Susłowski that he would never annoy him with his presence were it not that Władek was being married, or something like that. This "something like that" makes a fatal impression. Susłowski straightens himself with dignity and asks what Mr.

Świątecki means by "something like that." Mr. Świątecki replies that it is all the same to him—he would gladly let himself be polished for Wladek's sake, especially if he knew that Mr. Suslowski wished it. My future father-in-law looks at his wife, Kazia, and myself with a glance in which feelings of astonishment and bitterness are battling for supremacy. Fortunately I succeed in saving the situation. With rare presence of mind, I ask my future father-in-law to introduce me to such members of his family as are still unknown to me. We are introduced. We all sit down.

Kazia sits by me and puts her hand in mine. The room is filled with guests, yet all are silent. Cousin Jaczkowicz returns to his subject— increase of population. Świątecki looks under the table. In the silence the cousin's voice sounds louder and shriller. He has lost one of his front teeth, and every time he pronounces "sh" he utters a whistling sound.

"The most terrible calamity may arise from it—yes, for the whole of Europe," says Jaczkowicz.

"Emigration," suggests someone among the guests near by.

"Statisticians prove that even emigration cannot stop overpopulation."

Suddenly Świątecki raises his head and turns his fishy eyes on the speaker. "Then we should adopt the Chinese custom," he growls in an angry bass.

"With your permission, what do you mean by the Chinese custom?"

"In China parents have the right to exterminate their weak-minded offspring. In like manner should our children have the right to do away with weak-minded parents."

It is done! The lightning has struck! The lounge is moaning under the aunts, and I believe I am going mad. Suslowski closes his eyes and for some time loses the power of speech.

General silence!

Then the voice of my future father-in-law, full of anger, is heard:

"My dear sir, I hope that you as a Christian——"

"Why should I be a Christian?" Świątecki interrupts with head-shakings that predict no good.

Second blow!

The lounge commences to tremble under combined aunts, as if stricken by fever; it vanishes from my sight. I feel as if the earth were opening beneath me. Everything is lost! All hope is crushed!

Suddenly, ringing like a silver bell, Kazia's laughter breaks out, followed by Jaczkowicz, who laughs, not knowing why. I, knowing still less, follow him, still louder.

"Papa," cries Kazia, "Wladek has warned you that Mr. Świątecki is an original character. He is joking. I know he has a mother, to whom he is a most devoted son."

A devil, not a girl, that Kazia! She not only invents, she divines; for Świątecki really has a mother, and is a loving son. Kazia's laughter and her words make for a certain improvement; but a still better one is made by the entrance of the servant with cake and wine. It is the same porter who lately appropriated my last three roubles. They have fitted him with a dress coat for the occasion, and he walks with the dignity of a waiter, looking steadfastly at his tray, on which the glasses rattle. He moves as slowly as though the glasses were filled to the brim. I begin to fear he will drop the entire tray; however, my fears appear to be unfounded, and after a short pause the glasses are filled. We are coming to the ceremony of betrothal. A little cousin holds a porcelain plate on which are two rings. Her eyes are bulging out with curiosity, and the whole proceedings evidently cause her such ecstasy that she dances with the plate and rings. Susłowski rises, all the others rise after him, and the noise of chairs being pushed back is heard on every side. Deep silence reigns. I hear one of the matrons whisper a remark that she expected my ring to be more "respectable." In spite of this remark, the scene is so full of solemnity that the flies drop from the ceiling.

Susłowski speaks: "My children, receive the parental blessings."

Kazia kneels down—I kneel beside her.

What a face Świątecki must have made at that moment! Heavens, what a face! But I do not dare to look at him. I look at Kazia's muslin dress, which makes a very nice contrast with the carpet of faded red. The hands of both her parents are laid on our heads, then my future father-in-law says: "My daughter, you have had in the house of your parents the best example of what the wife should be to her husband. I deem it, therefore, unnecessary to teach you your duties, in which your husband, I hope, will instruct you. But I turn to you, Mr. Władysław——"

Here comes a little speech, during which I count one hundred and begin again at one. The citizen Susłowski, the office-

holder Suslowski, the father Suslowski, Suslowski the Roman, had the chance of a lifetime to show the greatness of his soul. The words, "Child, parents, duties, future, blessings, thorns, pure conscience," and the like, buzz in my ears like a swarm of wasps—attack my head, sting my neck, shoulders, and forehead. I must have tied my scarf too tightly, for it chokes me. I am suffocating. I hear the crying of Mrs. Suslowska, which moves me deeply, for she is a good woman at heart. I hear the rattle of the rings on the plate of the dancing cousin. Heavens and earth! what a face Świątecki must have on him now!

At last we rise. The cousin pushes the plate close to my very eyes. I exchange rings with Kazia. Ouf! I am betrothed! I think it's all over. But no! Suslowski requests us to receive the blessings of all the aunts. We do it. I kiss five hands which resemble the feet of storks. All the aunts hope I will not betray their confidence in me.

But what the deuce can they have in the way of confidence in me? Cousin Jaczkowicz locks me in his arms. I positively must have tied my scarf too tightly! Ah! the worst is past. They bring in tea. I sit near Kazia and pretend not to see Świątecki. The blackguard frightens the wits out of me again. Asked if he cares for rum in his tea, he answers that he is used to drink rum only by the bottle. As a whole, the evening is a success.

We reach the street. I breathe the air deeply. No doubt now, my scarf has been tied too tightly. Świątecki and I walk silently on. The silence begins to irritate me and finally becomes unendurable. I feel that it would be the correct thing for me to say something to Świątecki of my happiness, of how everything went off so splendidly, of my love for Kazia.

I gather my wits, but it is of no use. At last, when not far from the studio, I say, "Confess, comrade, life is still beautiful."

Świątecki stands still, looks at me and says, "Ass!"

We did not speak again that night.

VII

A WEEK after my betrothal my "Jews" is ready for exhibition. The picture is exhibited in a separate hall, and the management charges a special admission fee, one half of the receipts to belong to me.

A tremendous crowd throngs the exhibition from morning

till evening. I go there once, but as they gaze at me more than at the picture, I never go again.

Why be angered uselessly?

Were my picture a masterpiece of unheard-of magnificence, the public would look at it with the same curiosity which they devote to "Krao" or the Hottentot devouring live pigeons. Such a Hottentot am I at the present moment. It would be amusing were I really a monkey, as Świątecki asserts. I am, however, too much of an artist not to be angered by the degradation of art for the benefit of a person come into fashion.

Only three weeks ago I was hardly known to anybody; now I receive dozens of letters—mostly love letters. Of five, four begin thus:

"You will probably despise a woman who," etc., etc. I will surely not despise "a woman" if she will let me rest in peace. Were it not for Kazia, I would not, to be candid, leave those outpourings of feeling unnoticed. What exasperates me most is, how such an "unknown" can expect that a man who has never seen her before will meet her without further ado, just on her invitation. Remove your mask first, my beautiful unknown! And after having seen you, I will tell you—I will tell you nothing—ah, me—there is Kazia!

I receive also a letter from a woman—a white-haired friend of mine—in which I am called "master," and Kazia a little goose. "Master! is *this* your wife?" (Thus inquires my "friend.") "Is this a choice worthy of him toward whom the eyes of the whole nation are turned? You are the victim of an intrigue," etc. A strange idea! And a still stranger demand that I should marry, not after my heart's desire, but to please "public opinion." And poor Kazia is already in somebody's way! There are surely greater crimes than anonymous letters, but positively none greater—how shall I express myself?—but we'll let it go.

The day of our wedding is not yet named, but it will come soon. Meanwhile I request Kazia to dress herself in her best and accompany me to the exhibition. Let them see us together.

Świątecki's macabre painting has also arrived from Paris. "The Last Meeting" is the name of the picture. It represents a young man and a young girl, both lying on the dissecting table. The main idea of the picture is understood at the first glance. You see that both these loved each other in life, that misery

separated them, and death united them again. The students bent over the corpses have a rigid expression. There are defects in the perspective of the dissecting room, but the macabre figures are masterly. It blows icy cold from these corpses. The picture has not received any reward in the Salon, perhaps because it makes such an unpleasant, painful impression, but the critics praised it. In our painters' league there are doubtless many talents. Here, for instance, next to Świątecki's macabre is exhibited the picture by Franek Cepkowski, entitled "Korecki's Death." Tremendous vigour and vigorous individuality!

Świątecki calls Franek an idiot: first, because he parts his hair and wears a pointed beard; second, because he dresses in the latest style; and last, because he is so fearfully well-bred and ceremonious and often speaks of his high-born relations.

But Świątecki is mistaken. Talent is a bird which builds its nest where it pleases—now in a wild desert, now in a well-kept garden. I have known painters in Paris and Munich who looked like farm hands, and, again, like barbers and dudes—one would not give a copper for them. And yet all these fellows had such enthusiasm, such feeling for form, such conception of colour and the capability to reproduce it on canvas—it was astounding! Ostrzyński, who has a name ready-made for everything, would write about it in his *Paper Kite* thus: "*Spiritus fiat ubi vult.*" In Świątecki's opinion historical painting is an obscure barbarism. I never paint historical pictures, and have nothing to do with the question personally, but I hear so much from all sides of the so-called progressive theory that I am thoroughly disgusted with it. Our Polish painters have one defect: they wed themselves to some doctrine of art and live afterwards under its heel, look upon everything with its eyes, fashion their own art after it, and are more its apostles than artists. And yet I have also known painters who made themselves sick discussing about what art is and what it should be, and when it came to taking the brush in hand, have had nothing to show. I have often thought that the creating of theories of art belong to the philosophers; should they fail to make them logical, they are responsible for it. But painters should paint as their hearts teach them, and know how to paint—that is the main thing. Talent, in my opinion, is worth more than the grandest theory, and the grandest theory is not worthy of waiting on artistic freedom.

VIII

I WAS with Kazia and Suslowski at the exhibition. There were still crowds before my painting. As soon as we entered they began to whisper, and this time the whole of their attention was not devoted to my picture nor to myself, but to Kazia. The ladies did not take their eyes from her. I noticed that it made her feel extremely happy, and I did not begrudge her her pleasure. It was worse when she remarked that Świątecki's macabre study was an indecent picture. Suslowski said she spoke just what was "in his own soul," but I was wild that Kazia should have such views of art! I was angry and took immediate leave, pretending I must see Ostrzyński. In fact I did go to his office, but only to drag him along with me to luncheon.

IX

I SEE a marvel, and that 's the end!

Now I understand for the first time why a man has been given eyes. *Corpo di Racco!* What beauty!

I walk with Ostrzyński. At the corner of the street I see a lady pass. I stand as if rooted in the ground. I become wood—stone! I open my eyes, I lose my senses, I unconsciously grab Ostrzyński's cravat, and loosen it. Help!—I die!

That her features are perfect—what can this explain? Features are not everything. She is simply an artistic creation! A masterpiece as a drawing, a masterpiece as colouring, a masterpiece in conception. Greuze at the sight of her would have risen from his tomb and hanged himself in the consciousness that he merely painted scarecrows. I stare, I glare, I cannot take my eyes away. She walks alone—but no! With her walk Poetry, Music—with her walk Spring, Bliss, and Love. I am not sure that I should care to paint her on the spot; I should first kneel down before her and kiss her feet out of gratitude that she is so beautiful! What I would do I really do not know myself! She passes us, brilliant as a summer day. Ostrzyński greets her, but she sees him not. I wake as if from a magic trance and cry:

"We shall follow her!"

"Are you mad?" asks Ostrzyński. "I must tie my cravat. Leave me in peace; it is an acquaintance of mine."

"An acquaintance of yours? Introduce me to her!"

"I couldn't think of it! Think of your bride!"

I curse Ostrzynski and his posterity to the ninth generation, and am about to run after the unknown myself. Unfortunately she enters a carriage. I see from the distance her Florentine hat and her red parasol.

"Do you really know her?" I ask Ostrzyński.

"I know everybody!"

"Who is she?"

"Mrs. Helena Kolczanowska, born Turno, *alias* Miss Widow."

"How's that, Miss—Widow? Why so?"

"Her husband died at the wedding supper. When you recover your senses I will tell you her history. There lived a rich man, Mr. Kolczanowski de Kolczanowo, of noble birth, from the Ukraine. He had some very distinguished relatives, who hoped to be his heirs, and a dreadfully short neck that justified their expectations. I knew these heirs. They were really respectable people, but—as it often happens in this world—the most respectable and unselfish among them could not help looking constantly at Kolczanowski's neck. The old man grew weary of it, and, to spite his relatives, asked for the hand of his neighbour's daughter; drew up a legal marriage contract and transferred all his property to her. The wedding followed, then the wedding feast, and as it neared its end a stroke of apoplexy killed him on the spot. In this manner Mrs. Helena Kolczanowska became Miss Widow. Do you understand now?"

"How long since?"

"Three years ago. She was then twenty-two. She could have married twenty times since then, but she does not care to. It was supposed she waited for a prince. It proved to be false, as she has lately refused a prince. For the rest, I know positively that she is the least pretentious of women, which is best seen from the fact that Mrs. Helena Kolczanowska is, to this very day, an intimate friend of our famous sympathetic, talented actress, Eva Adami, whose schoolmate she was."

At these last words I make a jump for joy. If such is the case I need Ostrzyński no more. My dear, kind Eva will clear the way for me—will introduce me to Mrs. Helena Kolczanowska.

"Listen! Do you really refuse to introduce me to her?"

I ask Ostrzyński.

"When one insists on knowing any one, he will find the means for it," replies he; "but as you have left me out in the cold with Kazia I don't want it to be said that I was the cause. For the rest, how do I know if—adieu!"

X

THE same day I have an appointment to dine with Suslowski. I reply that I cannot come. It is true that I have never had toothache, but I may be allowed to have it now.

Helena is before my eyes all day long. What sort of a painter would he be who would not immediately fall to dreaming of such a face? In my soul I have painted her portrait ten times. The idea of a painting comes to me in which a face like Helena's would make a wonderful impression. But I would have to see her several times for that.

I go to see Eva Adami, but do not find her at home. In the evening I receive a card from Kazia with an invitation for the morning to the pump-room in the Saxon Gardens, and afterwards to coffee. A real bore—these waters and this coffee! I cannot go, for Eva is at home in the morning and out the whole day.

Eva Adami—(this is her stage name—her real name is Anna Jedlińska)—is an exceptional being. We have been friends for a long time, and *nous nous tutoyons*. For nine years she has been on the stage, and yet she has remained pure in the truest sense of the word. There are many women physically innocent, but if their secret thoughts should come to light, I believe the most vulgar cynic would blush for them.

The theatre depraves souls, especially the souls of women. It is difficult to insist that a woman who every evening plays love and devotion should not finally and instinctively form the idea that all those virtues form only the outer varnish of the drama, and have nothing to do with real life. The tremendous difference between art and actual life strengthens this idea in the actress; the rivalry and the fight for applause poison every noble impulse in her heart.

Contact with people so infected as actors brings out all the baser instincts. The whitest Angora cat would lose her whiteness under such circumstances. To come out victorious proves the presence of a great talent which is purified in the fire of art, or a thoroughly æsthetic nature through which evil can pass no more than water through the feathers of a swan.

To such *impermeable* natures belongs Eva Adami. At times, for whole evenings, over tea and with their pipes, my colleagues have discussed matters concerning the world of art, from the highest class of it, the poets, to the very lowest, the actors. An

artist—this is a being whose power of imagination is better developed than that of ordinary mortals, a being more susceptible than others to impressions, more sensuous, more passionate; a being who in the kingdom of happiness and the joys of life knows everything and strives for everything with the force of utmost intensity. This is an artist. He must possess a threefold strength of character and will-power to withstand temptation and conquer it. But as there is little reason why a flower more beautiful than the rest should therefore possess a larger power of resistance against the storm, there is just as little reason why an artist should be of stronger character than an ordinary man. On the contrary, it is easy to explain why he often has less character, for his vital strength is exhausted in the double fight in the world of art and in the everyday world. He is like a sick bird suffering from chronic fever, now disappearing beyond the clouds, now dragging his lame wings in the dust. Art gives him a repugnance to dust and the gutter, but everyday life robs him of the power to rise and fly. Hence the discordant fight between the inner and outer lives of artists. The world that demands more from the artist than from others, and condemns him, may be right; but Christ will be just when He saves him. Ostrzyński asserts that actors belong as much to the world of art as the various musical instruments—clarionets, French horns, trombones, and the like. But this is not true. The best proof is Eva Adami, who is an artist through and through, as much by the grace of her talent as her artistic feeling, which like a mother has saved her from evil.

Notwithstanding my great friendship for Eva, I have not seen her for a long time. She is very glad to see me, yet her face has a strange expression I cannot well explain.

"How are you, Wladek?" she said. "At last I see you!"

I am glad to find her in. She wears a Turkish morning robe—red palms on a cream-coloured ground, with wide velvet embroidery and short sleeves. The embroidery looks wonderfully pretty, and is reflected in her pale face and violet eyes.

I tell her so, and she seems delighted. I come directly to the point.

"My golden diva," I say, "you know Mrs. Kolczanowska, the enchanting beauty from the Ukraine?"

"Of course I do. She was my schoolmate."

"Introduce me to her!" Eva begins to shake her head.

"My dearest, my sweetest, do it for my sake."

"No, Wladek, I will not do it."

"How unkind you are! And I once almost fell in love with you."

What a mimosa Eva is! Hearing this, her colour changes, she puts her elbow on the table—a marvel, this elbow,—supports her pale face with the palm, and asks: "When was that?"

I am anxious to speak of Helena. However, I had almost fallen in love with Eva once, and as I want to humour her now I begin:

"It was thus: We once walked together from the theatre to the Botanic Gardens. Do you remember how beautiful that evening was? We sat down on a bench near the fountain. You said you wanted to listen to the nightingale. I was somewhat disposed to be melancholy. I took off my hat, as my head was aching. You went to the fountain, dipped your handkerchief in the water, and pressed it with your hand to my forehead. You appeared to me then as kind as an angel, and I thought to myself: 'If I grasp this hand and press it to my lips, it is all over with me—I shall fall mortally in love with her.'"

"Well, and——" asks Eva, half audibly.

"Then you suddenly sat down farther away from me, as if you suspected something."

Eva sits for a short time buried in thought, wakes up suddenly, and says with nervous haste: "Don't let us speak of this, I implore you!"

"Well, we will not speak of it. Do you know, Eva, I like you too much ever to be able to fall in love with you? One excludes the other. Ever since I have known you I have felt a genuine affection for you."

"But," says Eva, as if following her own thoughts, "is it true that you are betrothed?"

"It is."

"Why did you not tell me about it?"

"The affair was off once, and was rearranged only a short time ago. But when you mean to say that I, being engaged, have no right to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Helena, I will answer in advance. I was a painter before I was a bridegroom, and of course, you are not afraid for her?"

"Don't get that idea into your head. I will not introduce you to her, for I do not wish to expose her to evil tongues. They say that for the last few weeks half Warsaw is in love with you. Wonderful stories are told of your successes. Only

yesterday I heard the joke, that, of the Ten Commandments you have made one for yourself—do you know which?"

"Well?"

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife—in vain."

"Thou, O Lord, knowest my misery! But the joke is good."

"And, of course, just suits you?"

"Listen, Eva! Do you wish to know the whole truth? I have always been shy, bashful, and have never had success with women. People imagine—the Lord knows what, and yet you do not know how much there is in my exclamation, 'Thou, O Lord, knowest my misery!'"

"Povero maestro!"

"Leave that Italian alone. Will you introduce me to Mrs. Kolczanowska?"

"My dear Wladek! I cannot do it. The more you are generally known now as a Don Juan, the less reason there is why I, an actress, should introduce you to a woman who, like Helena, is lonely and attracts so much attention."

"Why do you receive me, then?"

"I? This is altogether different. I am an actress and can apply to myself the words of Shakespeare, 'Be thou chaste as ice, pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.'"

"Do you know it is enough to make one lose one's senses? Every one may know her, may visit her, may look at her—all but me. And why? Because I painted a good picture and gained some distinction."

"You are right—from your point of view," says Eva, smiling. "But I must confess that I knew beforehand why you came to me. Ostrzyński was here and declared decidedly it were 'better' not to introduce you to Helena."

"Ha! Now I understand! And you have promised him?"

"On the contrary, I was really angry. Still, I think it were 'better' not to make you acquainted with Helena. Now let us speak of your picture."

"Leave my picture alone, leave painting alone. Ah well! if such is the case, I shall know how to help myself. I declare that within the next three days I shall form the acquaintance of Mrs. Kolczanowska, if I have to force my way to her in some disguise."

"Disguise yourself as a gardener, and bring her a bouquet from Ostrzyński."

At the same moment there flashes through my mind an idea,

which seems to me so happy that I strike my forehead; and forgetting all the anger I had felt towards Eva, I exclaim:

"Give me your word that you will not betray me!"

"I give it," says Eva, becoming curious.

"Know, then, I will disguise myself as an old harp-player.¹ I have the harp and the necessary costume for it. I know the Ukraine well, and am acquainted with its songs and folklore. Mrs. Kolczanowska comes from the Ukraine, and is sure to receive me. Do you understand, now?"

"What an original idea!" says Eva. She is too much of an artist not to be pleased with my plan. She gives me her word not to betray me, and has nothing to say against the whole affair. "What an original idea!" she repeats. "Helena loves her Ukraine so much that she will surely melt into tears when she meets here in Warsaw a harper from home. But what will you say to her? how will you explain to her your presence on the Vistula?"

Unwillingly Eva becomes infected with my enthusiasm. We sit down and draw out the details of a regular conspiracy.

It is arranged that I put on a characteristic mask and go away with her in a carriage, so as not to excite the curiosity of on-lookers. Mrs. Helena is not to know anything of the plot. In due time Eva is to let the secret out.

In great good humour we amuse ourselves with our plans; I begin to kiss Eva's hands, and she keeps me for lunch.

I pass the evening with the Suslowskis. Kazia is a little out of humour because of my failure to come in the morning; but like an angel I bear all her moods, and think at the same time of to-morrow's adventure and—Helena.

XI

ELEVEN o'clock forenoon!

Eva will be here any moment. I have on a sack-cloth shirt, which leaves my bosom somewhat bare; a coat somewhat worn, but pretty good yet; a belt, boots, and everything else that is needed for the purpose. The hair of the grey wig falls over my eyes, and one would hardly think I wore a wig. My beard is a

¹ In Russia, especially in the Ukraine years ago, old Cossacks, blinded by brutal enemies, when captured in time of war, travelled through the country with an instrument not unlike an American banjo, playing doleful tunes, and accompanying the same with war-songs and folklore.—TRANSLATOR.

masterpiece of patience. From eight in the morning I have been busy mixing my natural hair with white streaks, till I have become so respectably grey that I never hope to reach such a stage in my old age; diluted sepia makes my features dark brown, while Świątecki had done some work on my wrinkles, worthy of a genius. I seem to be seventy years old. Świątecki declares that instead of painting I could make ends meet by posing as a model, by which Art would profit all the more.

Half-past eleven. Eva drives up. I send out to the carriage a bundle containing my ordinary attire, in case I am compelled to change my dress. I take the harp, go down as far as the carriage door, and say: "*Slava Bohu.*"

Eva is greatly astonished and amused.

"A wonderful make up! a splendid old singer!" she repeats laughing. "Only an artist has such ideas."

She herself looks like a summer morning. She wears a dress of plain silk and a straw hat with poppies. I cannot take my eyes away from her. She came in an open carriage, and the people in the street begin to surround us; but she does not mind it. At last the carriage is moving on; my heart begins to beat quicker. In fifteen minutes I shall see the Helena I have dreamed of. We have not advanced a hundred yards when I see Ostrzyński coming towards us. One sees him everywhere. He stops, seeing us, greets Eva, then commences to scan us both, especially me. I don't believe he recognizes me. Having passed him, I turn my head, and see him still standing there, following us with his eyes. At the corner of the street I lose sight of him.

The carriage moves pretty rapidly, yet the ride seems to me to last an age. At last we stop in Belvedere Alley. We are before Helena's house. I rush to the door, as if the house were on fire. Eva runs after me, crying. "What a disgusting old man!"

A porter, very showily dressed, opens the door for us, and at the sight of me his eyes open wide. Eva calms him, explaining that the old man comes with her, and we go upstairs. The chambermaid appears after a little time with the announcement that the lady is making her toilet in the next room, and disappears.

"Good morning, Helena!" cries Eva.

"Good day, Evie!" answers a charmingly fresh voice. "In a moment—in a moment I shall be ready!"

"Helena, you don't know what awaits you—what you will see in a moment. I have brought a harper along with me, the liveliest harper that ever wandered through the steppes of the Ukraine."

A joyful exclamation is heard in the adjoining room, the door opens, and Helena thunders in, *negligé*, her hair loosened and hanging down.

"A harper—a blind harper—here in Warsaw!"

"Not blind! He sees!" cries Eva, afraid to carry the joke too far.

But it is too late, for at the same moment I throw myself at Helena's feet, and say in the purest of dialects: "Cherub of God!"

And I embrace her tiny feet with both my hands, and my glance follows them upward with admiration.

Nations, kneel down! Come, gather around with incense-burners, all ye peoples! A Venus of Milo, a real Venus!

"Cherub!" I repeat, with genuine enthusiasm. My harper's ecstasy is explained by the fact that after long wandering, I have seen a being from the Ukraine once more.

In spite of that, Helena hurriedly draws her feet from my hands and escapes into the next room. As quick as lightning my eyes catch a glimpse of her bare shoulders and her neck that remind me of the Psyche in the Neapolitan Museum. She disappears behind the door, and I remain kneeling in the middle of the room.

Eva threatens me with her parasol and laughs, hiding her rosy nose in a bouquet of mignonette.

Meanwhile a conversation begins through the door in the brightest dialect ever spoken in the Ukraine. I was prepared in advance for all questions, and lie, as if reading from a book: "I am a bee-keeper from near Czehryń. My daughter married a nobleman of Warsaw, and went with him thither, and my old bones felt lonely on my bee-farm, till I followed her. Kind people have from time to time given me money for my songs. And now! Now I will see my beloved daughter again, give her my blessing and return home, as I am homesick for my native soil of the Ukraine. There, alone among my bee-hives, I will die. Every one must die, and for old Philip the day has been at hand for some time."

What an artist Eva is!

She knows, of course, who I am, and yet is so much moved

by my playing my part, that she, full of melancholy, nods her beautiful head and looks at me with compassion.

Helena's voice from the next room thrills with emotion.

The door opens a little, a wonderfully white hand shows through the opening, and all unexpectedly I am the owner of three roubles, which I accept, as I cannot do otherwise. I give vent to a veritable torrent of blessings in the name of all the saints, and pour the stream on Helena's head.

The chambermaid enters with the announcement that Ostrzyński is downstairs, and asks permission to see the lady.

"Don't let him in, my dear!" cries Eva, frightened.

Helena assures her that she will not receive him. She even expresses surprise at such an early visit. I cannot conjecture why Ostrzyński, who makes much of social etiquette, and is famous for his mastery of it, should come here at such an early hour.

"Something extraordinary must have happened!" says Eva.

But there is no time for further explanations, for at that moment Helena appears in full dress, and simultaneously lunch is announced. The ladies leave for the dining-room. Helena wants me to sit at the table, but I hesitate and establish myself with my harp on the threshold. After a short while a plate is put before me, the contents of which are sufficient to give indigestion to six old harpers of the Ukraine. I begin, however, for I am hungry, and besides, while eating, I can observe Helena. Truly, a more beautiful head it would be hard to find in all the art galleries of the world. Never in my life have I seen such transparent eyes. You see through them all the emotions of the soul, just as you see the bed of a stream through its pure waters.

Her eyes also possess the quality of beginning to laugh before the lips, whereby the face is brightened as if by a sunbeam. What incomparable sweetness around her closed mouth! This is a head in the style of Carlo Dolce, as much as the drawing of the eyes and brow reminds me of the noblest types of Sanzia. I stop eating, and gaze, and stare;—I could look until the end of my life!

"You were not here yesterday," says Helena to Eva. "I thought you would have come over in the afternoon."

"In the morning I had a rehearsal, and in the afternoon I wanted to see Magórski's picture."

"Did you see it?"

"Not very well; the crowd was too great. And you?"

"I was there early in the morning. What an artist! One might really weep with his Jews."

Eva looks at me, and I feel myself in heaven.

"I will go there again as often as I can," continues Helena.

"Let us go there together. Will you?"

"What about to-day? I was delighted not only with the picture, but also with the fact that such talent belongs to us."

And not to worship such a woman!

I hear further: "What a pity that you hear such strange things about this Magórski! I must tell you that I am dying of curiosity to meet him."

"Oh?" says Eva, in a nonchalant tone.

"You know him, don't you?"

"I can assure you that he loses much on closer acquaintance. Conceited and vain—oh, how vain!"

I have such a desire to show Eva my tongue, that I can scarcely control myself; but she looks at me with her roguish violet eyes and says:

"You seem to have lost your appetite, old man?"

I must speak. I can no longer endure it.

She says to Helena:

"Oh yes, much better to admire Magórski than to know him. Ostrzyński calls him a genius in the body of a barber."

If Ostrzyński has said anything like that, I would crop his ears off; still I know very well that Eva is a little devil. I think, however, that she goes too far this time.

Happily, lunch is at an end. We go into the garden, where I am to sing my songs. This does not amuse me very much. I would rather be with Helena as an artist than as a harper. But it is too late now! I sit down near the wall in the shade of the chestnut trees, through the leaves of which the sun shines checkering the ground. The sunny spots tremble, quiver, vanish, and appear again, according as the wind moves the leaves. The garden is very wide, the tumult of the city hardly reaches it, especially as the noise is drowned by the splashing of a fountain. The heat is great among the thick leaves, the chirping of birds is heard soft and faint as if in a dream. Otherwise absolute silence reigns. I observe that a really pretty picture has been formed. The garden, the thickness of the trees, the spots of sunshine, the two beautiful women leaning on each other, and I, the old harper, sitting with harp against the wall; all this has its charm, which I, as a painter, consider

perfect. I am all absorbed in my role, and with sincere emotion sing:

Men consider me quite happy,
And I laugh at their mistake.
Oh! they see not when I'm weeping,
When my heart doth almost break.
Lonely wandered I through life,
Lonely to my grave I'll go.
Why didst bear me, O my mother,
In th' evil hour of long ago?

Eva is captivated, being an artist; Helena, as a daughter of the Ukraine; and I, because both are so beautiful that the sight of them intoxicates me. Helena listens to my singing without affectation, without artificial enthusiasm; in her transparent eyes I read that the song gives her genuine pleasure. What a contrast to those ladies from the Ukraine who come to Warsaw for the carnival, and bore their dancing partners to death during the quadrille with stories of homesickness for the Ukraine, while, in fact, you could not drag them back with horses while the dancing season lasts!

Helena listens, nods her beautiful head, as if keeping time, and whispers from time to time, "I know that!" and sings with me. I surpass myself. I bring forth from my memory and my lungs my whole stock of the steppes; I mix together Hetmans, knights, Cossacks, falcons, Sonias, Marusias, steppes, grave mounds, and what not. I am surprised that I remember all these.

Time passes as in a dream.

I leave, tired but fascinated.

XII

IN the studio I unexpectedly find old Suslowski and Kazia. They wished to surprise me.

Why in the world did Świątecki tell them that I should return so soon?

Neither Kazia nor the old man recognize me—a proof that I am well disguised. I approach Kazia and take her hand. She steps back, frightened.

"Kazia, don't you recognize me?" I ask.

Her astonished face makes me laugh.

"This is Wladek," says Świątecki.

Kazia looks at me closely, and finally she cries laughingly:

"Phew! what an ugly old man!"

I, an ugly old man! I would like to know where she saw a better-looking. But for poor Kazia, brought up in the æsthetic principles of her father, every old harper would look ugly. I retire to our kitchen and return in a few minutes in my natural dress and form.

Kazia and her parent inquire what this masquerading means.

"What the masquerade means! The thing is quite simple. You see, my friends, we painters from time to time render one another friendly services in posing as models. Thus, for example, Świątecki posed for the old Jew when I painted my Jews. Did you not recognize him in the picture, Kazia? I pose now for Cepkowski. It is the custom among painters, especially in Warsaw, where there is a lack of models."

"We came to take you by surprise," says Kazia; "and besides, I have never been in a studio in my life. Heavens! what disorder! Is it so with all painters?"

"Almost all."

Mr. Susłowski declares he much prefers to find more order, and he expects in the future a great improvement in this respect. I suppress a desire to break my harp on his head. Kazia laughs coquettishly and says:

"There is a certain painter, a great ne'er-do-well, with whom things will look quite different as soon as I get to work. Everything will be properly arranged, put in its proper place, dusted and cleaned." She raises her *retroussé* nose in the air, looks at the wreaths of spider-webs which adorn the corners of my studio, and adds: "Such disorder may well scare away purchasers. One might come here and believe oneself to be in an old-clothes market. Here, for instance, take this weapon—how horribly rusty it is!—and yet one has only to call the servant-girl, tell her to crush some Bath-brick, and all will sparkle and gladden like a new samovar."

Heaven love us! She speaks of patrons, and wishes to clean my old dug-up armour with Bath-brick! Oh, Kazia!

The delighted Susłowski kisses her brow, while Świątecki utters an evil foreboding sound that reminds one of the grunt of a wild boar.

Kazia, threatening me with her little forefinger, continues: "Please take notice that everything shall be changed," and concludes: "And if a certain gentleman will not come to us this evening, he will be horrid, and we will love him no longer."

With this she closes her eyes. I cannot deny that there is a certain charm in her mannerism. I promise to come, and escort my future family to the door. Returning to the studio I find Świątecki casting distrustful side glances at a package of hundred-rouble notes lying before him.

"What's that?"

"Do you know what has happened?"

"I don't."

"I have robbed somebody like a common thief."

"How is that?"

"I have sold my macabre."

"And this is the money for it?"

"It is. I am a mean usurer."

I embrace Świątecki, congratulate him from the fullness of my heart, and he begins to tell me how it happened.

"After your departure I was sitting all alone, when in comes a gentleman and asks if I am Świątecki. I reply that I would like to know why I should not be Świątecki; to which he answers: 'I have seen your picture and wish to buy it.'"

"'Very well,' I say, 'but allow me to tell you that you must be an idiot to buy such a miserable picture.' To which he says: 'I am not an idiot, but I have a craze for buying pictures painted by idiots.' 'If such is the case, then it's all right,' say I. He asks for the price, and I reply, 'How does that concern me?' 'I will give you so much and so much.' 'Well, then, if you wish to give that sum, give it.' He gave it and went away, leaving a card with the name, 'Bialkowski, Doctor of Medicine.' I am a mean usurer, and that settles it!"

"Long life to the macabre! Świątecki, you must marry!"

"I'll hang myself first," says Świątecki. "I am a mean usurer and nothing else."

XIII

IN the evening I am at the Suslowski's. I sit with Kazia in the alcove in the parlour, where there is a small sofa.

Mrs. Suslowska is sitting by a table, which is lighted by a bright lamp, busy sewing some pieces of Kazia's trousseau.

Mr. Suslowski at the same table reads with dignity the evening issue of the *Paper Kite*.

I am not in a very good humour. I would like very much to conceal it, and draw very near to Kazia. Silence reigns in

the room. Only Kazia's whispering is heard. When I try to embrace her, she pleads: "Wladek, papa will see!"

Suddenly "papa" begins to read aloud: "The painting of the noted artist Świątecki, entitled 'The Last Meeting,' was bought to-day by Dr. Bialkowski for fifteen hundred roubles."

"Oh yes!" I say, "Świątecki sold the picture this morning."

Then I try again to embrace Kazia, and again hear her murmur, "Papa will see."

Unwillingly I turn my eyes towards Mr. Suslowski. I see his bent face suddenly change, he holds his hand before his eyes as if shading them, and bends over the *Paper Kite*. What the deuce has he found?

"What is the matter, papa?" asks Mrs. Suslowska.

He rises, moves a few steps towards us, stops, looks at me with a penetrating glance, wrings his hands and begins to shake his head.

"What ails you?"

"Here, you see that treachery and crime will come to the light of day!" he replies in a pathetic tone. "Sir, read this, if your sense of shame will allow you!"

At the last words he makes a movement as if he would wrap himself in a toga, and hands me the *Paper Kite*. I take the sheet, and my glance falls on an article with the heading: "The Harper from the Ukraine." I become somewhat upset, and I read with haste the following:

A few days since there appeared within the walls of our city a rare guest in the person of a very old harper, who makes the rounds of the houses of the families from the Ukraine residing here, and sings his songs on receipt of alms. We hear that our well-known and beloved actress E. A. is particularly captivated by him. She could have been seen only this morning driving out with him. In the first days of the stranger's visit, a wonderful rumour was noised about that one of our most distinguished painters was parading under the peasant coat of a harper, with the evident object (without arousing the suspicions of husbands and guardians) of finding easy access to the boudoirs of the ladies. We are convinced that this rumour has no foundation whatever, if only because our Diva would not be a party to such acts. The old harper has, according to our investigations, just arrived from the Ukraine. He is a little demented, but his memory is still bright.

Heaven and hell!

Suslowski is so excited that he cannot utter a sound. At last he gives free vent to his rage.

"What new hypocrisy, what justification, will you put forth for your behaviour? Was it not you whom we saw to-day in that shameful disguise? Who is that old harper?"

"I was that harper," I reply. "I cannot understand, however, why you find my disguise shameful."

At this moment Kazia snatches the *Paper Kite* from my hands and begins to read, but Suslowski wraps himself closer in a toga of indignation and says:

"Having hardly entered an honourable house, you bring into it your immorality. Before you are yet the husband of this unfortunate child, you betray our honour in the company of some light-minded woman; you abuse our confidence in the most shameless manner; you break your sacred word. And for whose sake? For the sake of a theatre hetaira!"

I am wild with rage.

"Sir! I have heard enough of your phrases! This hetaira is worth more than ten Catos of your calibre. You are nothing to me as yet, my dear sir, and I beg you to know that you bore me. I have had enough of you and your pathos and——"

Words fail me, and besides I have no further need of them, for Suslowski suddenly unbuttons his waistcoat as if wishing to say:

"Strike your blow, don't spare me, here is my breast!"

I never think of striking, but declare that I will retire, for fear I may find a good deal more to say to Mr. Suslowski.

And I really take my departure without bidding good night to any one. The fresh air cools my heated head a little. It is nine o'clock in the evening, and the weather is beautiful. I must walk awhile to cool myself down, so I hasten to the Belvedere Alley. The windows of Helena's villa are dark; evidently she is not at home. I don't know why this so greatly disappoints me. If I could but see her shadow through the window I would be calmer, but, as it is, rage devours me again.

What I shall do with Ostrzyński at our next meeting I don't know yet. He is happily a man who will not shirk responsibility. But on what point shall I tackle him?

The paragraph was devilishly well written. Ostrzyński denies that the harper was a painter in disguise. He seemingly takes Eva under his protection, and betrays the whole plot to Helena. Evidently he aims at compromising Eva in Helena's eyes, takes his revenge on me on account of Kazia, and makes me look ridiculous.

If only he had not said that I was demented! But it's done! In Helena's eyes I must be ridiculous. Of course she reads the *Paper Kite*.

Oh, what an unpleasant story, and what a disappointment for Eva!

How Ostrzyński must triumph! Decidedly something must be done, but may I become a reporter of the *Paper Kite* if I know what! The idea strikes me that it would be best to ask Eva's advice. She is playing to-night. I will hasten to the theatre and speak to her when the performance is over. There is still time.

Half an hour later I am in her dressing-room.

Our theatres are not distinguished for their luxurious furnishings. A room with whitewashed walls, two gas jets with flames trembling in the draught, a looking-glass, a washstand, a couple of chairs in one corner, a lounge—probably the private property of the Diva:—this is her dressing-room. A number of toilet utensils before the looking-glass, a cup of black coffee not quite empty, flasks of rouge and powder, grease paints, several pairs of gloves which still retain the form of the hands, two false tresses; on a side wall a collection of dresses, white, rose, dark, light, and heavy; on the floor two basketfuls of toilet articles. The rooms are filled with the odour of powder and perfume. What a gay disorder! how everything has been hastily thrown together! What colours and reflections, what light and shade effects are wrought by the quivering of the gas jets! It is a picture of its own sort; there is character in it. It is true there is nothing more here than in every other dressing-room, and yet there is a certain "something" which makes it look not like a dressing-room, but a sanctuary; a certain charm covers everything. Above all this disorder, within these badly whitewashed, scratched walls, hovers the Spirit of Art.

Thundering applause is heard. Ah! The performance is at an end. Through the walls exclamations reach my ears: "Adami, Adami!"

A quarter of an hour passes and still they clamour.

At last Eva rushes in dressed as "Theodora." She has a crown on her head; beneath, her eyes are blackened, and her cheeks are painted red. Her undressed hair falls like a storm on her bare neck and shoulders. She is so feverishly excited and exhausted that she can scarcely make herself heard when she whispers to me: "How are you, Wladek?" She quickly removes

her crown and throws herself in her princely robes on the lounge. She is unable to speak, but she looks at me silently like a weary bird. I sit down beside her, put my hand on her head, and think of nothing else but her. I see in those blackened eyes the hardly extinguished flame of inspiration. I see on this brow the reflection of Art. I see how this girl brings to the altar of the dramatic Moloch her health, her blood, her life. I see how her lungs are short of breath—and such compassion masters me, such sympathy, that I don't know what to do.

Thus we sit silent a long while. At last Eva points with her finger to a number of the *Paper Kite* lying on the dressing-table and says: "How unpleasant! oh, how unpleasant!"

Suddenly she bursts out into nervous weeping and begins to shiver and tremble like a leaf. I am well aware that she weeps from exhaustion, and not because of the *Paper Kite*; that the newspaper article is nonsense, which no one will think of in the morning; that the whole of Ostrzyński is not worth one of Eva's tears, and yet my heart is oppressed the more. I grasp her hands and cover them with kisses, I press her to my breast. My heart beats more violently than ever; something wonderful is happening to me. I kneel, not knowing why, at Eva's feet. A cloud covers my eyes. Finally, losing every sense, I lock her in my arms.

"Wladek! Wladek! Have pity!" whispers Eva.

But I press her to my breast, I forget everything. I am gone mad. I kiss her brow, her eyes, her mouth, and can only utter these words: "I love you! I love you!"

Eva drops her head backward, her hands feverishly embrace my neck, and I hear her whisper, "I have loved you so long!"

XIV

If there is in this world a truer, dearer soul than Eva, I am a pickled herring.

They say about us artists that we act and do everything under the impulse of the moment. It is not true. It happens that I have loved Eva for a long time, but I have been such an ass that I was unconscious of it. The Lord alone knows what took place in me when I escorted her home that night. We went hand in hand, not speaking a word. I constantly pressed Eva's arm to my side, and she pressed mine. I felt that she loved me with all her might. I took her upstairs, and when we

found ourselves in the small boudoir, we became so confused that we did not dare to look into each other's eyes.

When, however, Eva covered her face with her hands, I drew them tenderly back, and said:

"Eva, you are mine, are you not?" And she drew closer to me, and answered:

"Yes, yes!"

She was so enchanting, her eyes were so dreamy and sparkling at the same time; in her behaviour there was such a sweet languor, that I could scarcely tear myself away from her.

To tell the truth, she could not break from me either, just as if she wished to reward herself for her long silence and her feelings hidden so long.

I came home late. Świątecki had not yet gone to bed. He was working by lamplight on some woodcut for an illustrated periodical.

"Here is a letter for you," said he, without raising his eyes from his work.

I take the letter from the table and feel through the envelope a ring. 'Tis well; this will do service to-morrow. I open the letter and read the following:

I know that the return of the ring will please you, for you evidently desire it. What concerns me is, that I do not intend to rival actresses.

K.

Short at any rate. The letter breathes anger, nothing else. If ever Kazia appeared to me surrounded by a charm, at this moment she has lost that charm for ever. How remarkable! Everybody believes that Eva was the *raison d'être* of my disguise and all these happenings, and in fact, Eva will be the cause of all that follows.

I crumple the letter, put it in my pocket, and go to bed. Świątecki lifts his eyes from his work and looks at me, expecting me to say something; but I am silent.

"That rascal Ostrzyński has been here this evening," says Świątecki.

THE next day, as early as ten o'clock, I want to fly to Eva, but it can't be done, as I have guests. Baron Kartoffler is here, ordering a replica of my "Jews." He offers fifteen hundred

roubles; I demand two thousand. We settle at that. After his departure Tanzenberg orders two portraits. Świątecki, who is an anti-Semite, calls me a Jew-dauber. I would like to know, though, who buys our pictures, if not "Finance." And if "Finance" shudders at Świątecki's macabre I am not to blame.

I call on Eva at one o'clock, hand her the ring and tell her that we will make a trip to Rome after the wedding.

Eva consents willingly, and in the same degree as we were silent last night so we chatter to-day. I tell her of orders received, and we rejoice together. The portraits, however, must be finished before our journey, but the "Jews" for Kartoffler I shall paint in Rome. Then we will return to Warsaw; I shall set up in a new studio, and we will live as if in Paradise. Thus I form plans for the future, and among others declare that we shall celebrate the anniversary of yesterday as long as we live.

Eva hides her head on my shoulder and begs me not to speak of it. She encircles my neck with the short sleeves of her morning gown and calls me her "great man." She is paler than usual, her eyes are more violet-like than ever; but she is beaming with joy.

Oh, what an ass I have been—to have such a woman near me and yet look for fortune somewhere else, in an atmosphere to which I was a stranger!

What an artistic nature is Eva's! She is my betrothed, and so filled with her new role that she unconsciously plays the young and happy bride. I cannot blame the dear creature who has moved in the theatre so many years.

After dinner we drive to Helena Kolczanowska's house. From the moment that Eva can introduce us as her betrothed the harper joke becomes harmless, and can breed no more unpleasantness between the two friends. Helena receives us with open arms and is happy with Eva in her good fortune. We laugh like three fools over the whole harper business, and over what he was compelled to hear about the painter Magórski. Only yesterday I wished to stab Ostrzyński; to-day I admire his cleverness. Helena laughs so much that her transparent eyes fill with tears. She looks most enchanting. When she bows at the end of our visit I cannot take my eyes from her, and Eva herself is so fascinated that she unconsciously imitates that inclination of the head several times during the rest of the day.

We agree that after our return from abroad I shall paint Helena's portrait. If I only succeed in reproducing these tender, almost transparent features; this face so full of expression that every shadow finds its reflection on it, as a cloudlet in clear waters!

But I will succeed. Why shouldn't I? The evening number of the *Paper Kite* contains unheard-of stories about orders which I am supposed to have received. My income is estimated by thousands!

Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that next morning I receive a letter from Kazia, in which she declares she sent back the ring under the influence of anger and jealousy; that if I will come now, and, together with her, fall at the feet of her parents, they may be softened yet. I have had more than enough of this falling-at-feet business and forgiveness. I let it lie without reply. Let him fall at their feet who cares to do it. Let Ostrzyński marry Kazia. I have my Eva.

At the same time my silence seems to have created great consternation at the Susłowski's, for a few days afterwards comes the same messenger with a letter from Kazia, this time addressed to Świątecki. He shows me the letter. Kazia begs him to come and discuss matters on which her whole future depends. She reckons on his heart, on his sense of justice, which she divined in him at the very first glance, and hopes he will not refuse the prayer of an unfortunate woman. Świątecki curses, murmurs something in his beard about low Philistines, and the necessity of stringing them up together with their posterity at the very first opportunity—but still he goes.

I guess they want to exercise through him some influence on me.

Świątecki, who has naturally a soft heart, is evidently conquered. For a whole week he makes daily visits to the Susłowski's, and for three days he hovers round me, casting glances like a wolf at me. At last he asks me at tea very angrily:

"Listen! what do you propose to do with the girl?"

"With what girl?"

"With that Susłowska, or what's her name."

"I propose to do nothing with the Susłowska, or what's her name."

A short pause ensues, and Świątecki continues:

"She cries the whole day long, till I cannot endure it."

What a good soul! His voice trembles with emotion; but he

snorts like a rhinoceros, and adds: "A respectable man does not behave in such a manner."

"Świątecki, you begin to remind me of Papa Susłowski."

"Probably I do:—I much prefer, however, to remind you of Papa Susłowski than to wrong his daughter."

"Leave me alone, I beg you."

"Well then, from now I know you no longer."

Our conversation ends with that, and from that moment I do not speak to Świątecki. We pretend not to know each other, which is all the livelier, as we still live together, drink our tea together in the morning, and neither of us intends to move from the studio.

The day of my marriage with Eva is approaching. The whole of Warsaw is made aware of it through the *Paper Kite*. Everybody looks at us, everybody admires Eva. At the exhibition we are surrounded by such crowds that we can scarcely make our way out.

My unknown friend again sends me an anonymous note, in which she appeals to my heart with a warning that Eva is not the right wife for a man like me, who—

"I don't believe what they say about the relations of Mme Adami and Mr. Ostrzyński," writes my anonymous friend; "yet you, honourable master, are in need of a wife, who is perfectly willing to sacrifice herself for your fame and greatness. Mme Adami, on the contrary, is herself an artist, and needs water to move her own water-mill. . . ."

Świątecki still continues his visits to the Susłowski's, but more as a comforter now, as they must be aware of my plans.

I succeed in getting from the management an unlimited leave of absence for Eva. She begins to comb her hair like a country girl, dresses very modestly, and wears gowns well closed up at the neck. These gowns become her very well. The scene in the dressing-room has not been repeated; Eva does not permit it. At the most I am only allowed to kiss her hands. This makes me very impatient, but as I flatter myself that even she—

She loves me passionately. We pass whole days together. I begin to give her lessons in drawing. She longs for these lessons.

XVI

OMNIPOTENT Zeus, upon what must thou look from the summit of Olympus! Things happen of which our philosophers could never dream. On the day of my wedding Świątecki comes to me, jabs me with his elbow, and says, with his dishevelled head turned aside, in gloomy tones:

"Do you know, Wladek, I have committed a crime?"

"Well, confess it to me!" I answer. "What sort of a crime?"

Świątecki still looks at the floor, and says as if he were speaking to himself:

"That a man who is a drunkard, a talentless idiot, morally and physically degraded, that such a man should marry a girl like Kazia—is it not a crime?"

I cannot believe my ears, but I embrace Świątecki, without caring twopence that he pushes me away.

His wedding takes place in a few days.

XVII

AFTER a few months' residence in Rome, we, Eva and I, receive an elegant card of invitation to attend the wedding of Ostrzyński with Mrs. Helena Kolkzanowska. We cannot leave, as Eva's health does not permit it. She still paints and makes immense progress. I received a medal from Pesth. A Croatian millionaire bought my picture. I have also formed connections with Goupil.

In Verona a son is born to me. Eva herself says she has never seen such a child. He is something out of the ordinary.

We are back in Warsaw since some months. I have established a wonderful studio.

We visit the Ostrzyński's quite often. He has sold the *Paper Kite*, and is at present President of the Society for Distributing Barley Flour to Idle Working-Men. One can hardly form an idea of his greatness and the figure he cuts. He taps me on the shoulder and says, "How 's everything, my good fellow?" He protects literary talent, and has a reception each Wednesday.

Helena is charming as always; she is as beautiful as a dream. They have no children.

Help! I am dying of laughter.

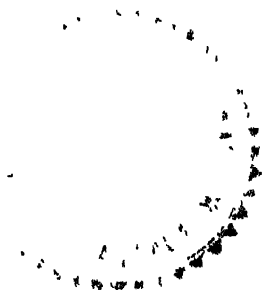
The Świątecki's have returned from Paris. She plays the

wife of an artist in golden Bohemia; he wears silk shirts, hair parted in the middle, and a trimmed beard. I can readily understand how she conquered his habits, his character; but how she conquered his hair will remain a puzzle for ever. Świątecki does not give up his macabre studies, but he also paints genre pictures and landscapes. He is a great success. He also paints portraits which are less successful, as they always remind me of corpses—in the colour of the faces.

I ask him in the spirit of old friendship whether he is happy with his wife. He says he never could have dreamt of such good fortune. I must confess that in this respect Kazia has surpassed my expectations of her.

I should also be perfectly happy, but Eva is commencing to ail. She is very charming all the same. I heard her cry once at night. I knew what it meant; she is longing for the stage. She is silent, but she pines. I have started a portrait of Mrs. Ostrzyńska. Indeed an incomparable woman! My respect for Ostrzyński would not prevent me — And were it not that I still love Eva tremendously, I really don't know but what ---

But my love for Eva is immense, tremendous!



LET US FOLLOW HIM

Translated by S. C. DE SOISSONS

I

CAIUS SEPTIMUS CINNA was a Roman patrician whose youth was spent in the hard life of the camp. When a man he returned to Rome to enjoy his honours, and to spend, in luxurious living, his large but rapidly diminishing fortune. Enjoying to the full all that the great city could give him, his nights were spent at feasts in magnificent villas; his days passed in polemical controversies with the lanistas, in discussions with the rhetoricians at the tepidaria, where they held debates varied with the gossip of the city and the world; at the circuses, at the races, at the gladiatorial combats, with the Thracian fortune-tellers, and with the wonderful dancing-girls brought from the islands of the archipelago.

A relative, on his mother's side, of the famous Lucullus, he inherited the tastes of an epicure. At his table one would find Greek wines, oysters from Neapolis, locusts from Numidia preserved in honey from Pontus. All that Rome possessed he obtained, from fish from the Red Sea to the white game from the banks of the Borysthenes. He used the good things of this world not only as a soldier who feasts boisterously, but also as a patrician who chooses daintily. He persuaded himself to admire, or perhaps himself came to admire, beautiful things: statues from the ruins of Corinth, the red-figured vases from Attica, Etruscan vases or those of misty Sericum, Roman mosaics, wondrous woven fabrics from the plains of the Euphrates, Arabian incense, and all the little things that matter which fill up the emptiness of patrician life. He knew how to talk of these things as a connoisseur among the elder patricians who decorated their bald pates with garlands of roses, and chewed heliotrope after their feasts. He felt equally the beauty of the periods of Cicero, and of the verses of Horace or Ovid. Educated by an Athenian rhetor, he spoke Greek fluently, memorized whole books of the Iliad, and would sing the songs of Anacreon during the feast until he was either drunk or hoarse. Through his master and the rhetors he became so familiar with the philosophies that he understood the architecture of the different

mental structures reared in Hellas and the colonies; and he also grasped the fact that they were lying in ruins. He knew personally a great many stoics who were not at all congenial, because he regarded them firstly as a political party, and secondly as gloomy thinkers opposed to the joys of life. Sceptics were often seated at his table, where between courses they upset whole systems of philosophy, proclaiming, over their wine-filled goblets, that life was vanity, that truth was something unattainable, that absolute quietude was the true aim of all sages.

He listened to all this, but it made no deep impression on him. He did not profess any particular principles, nor did he care to do so. He looked on life as he looked on the sea, where the wind blew as it listed; and wisdom to him was the art of trimming one's sails. Besides, he valued his broad shoulders, his handsome Roman head with its strong profile and mighty jaws: with these he felt sure he could walk safely through the world.

Although not belonging to the school of the sceptics he was practically a sceptic, and something, too, of a hedonist, though he recognized that luxury was not happiness. And, ignorant of the true teaching of Epicurus, he regarded himself as an epicurean. Generally speaking he looked upon this philosophy as a kind of mental gymnastic quite as good as that taught by the lanistas. When he was tired of chopping logic he went to the circus to see the blood of gladiators flow.

He did not believe in the gods, nor in virtue, nor in truth, nor in happiness; but he had his superstitions, and the mysterious faiths of the Orient aroused his curiosity. He held the belief that life was a great amphora—the better the quality of the wine it contained the richer it looked; so he was trying to fill his amphora with the richest wine. He loved no one, but he liked many things; chiefly, his magnificent head and his handsome patrician foot.

In the first years of his elegantly riotous leisure he was ambitious to astonish all Rome, and he achieved his desire many times. Later on he became indifferent to such conquests.

II

In the end, by his manner of living he ruined himself. His property was seized by his creditors; and in its place all Cinna had left to him was a sense of utter weariness; as if he were exhausted by great exertion, satiety, and one other very

unexpected thing—a feeling of deep unrest. Had he not enjoyed riches, love—as it was understood by his fellows—luxury, the glory, perils, and honours of war? Had he not obtained knowledge, more or less, of the circle of human thought; had he not exhausted poetry and art?—gleaned from life all that it had to give? Yet he had the feeling that something eluded him, and that that something was of prime importance. He knew not what it was, and vainly he questioned himself in the endeavour to solve the enigma. Often he tried to free himself from these insistent thoughts which increased his restlessness; he tried to convince himself that life contained nothing more than what he had tasted; but his restlessness, instead of decreasing, so grew, that it seemed to him he was not only disturbed in his own concern but in that of all Rome. He envied the sceptics while at the same time condemning them for their notion that the yearnings of life can be satisfied with vacuity. In him were two personalities: one seemed to be astonished at his restlessness, the other recognized its necessity.

Shortly after the loss of his property, Cinna was appointed, through the powerful influence of his family, to a government post at Alexandria, in order that in that rich country he might re-establish his fallen fortunes. His restlessness took ship with him at Brundisium and was his shipmate during the sea voyage. In Alexandria Cinna thought that his government post, the meeting with new people, another world, and fresh impressions, would free him from his importunate associate; but he was mistaken. One month passed, then two; then, even as the wheat of Demeter brought from Italy waxed stronger in the rich soil of the Delta, so this restlessness from a small bush grew into a mighty tree, and threw dark and darker shadows on Cinna's soul.

At first Cinna tried to suppress this feeling by indulging in the kind of life he had led in Rome. Alexandria was a luxurious city, full of Greek maidens with golden hair and fair complexions, which the Egyptian sun filled with amber-coloured transparent lights. In their embraces he sought relief.

This satiated him, and he began to contemplate suicide, by which means many of his friends had escaped the troubles of life, and with much less provocation than Cinna had—often from ennui, emptiness, or absence of desire for further enjoyment. A slave, holding in his hand a sword, strongly and dexterously, would end all in a moment. Cinna was haunted by these thoughts, and he had all but decided to follow their

beckoning, when a wonderful dream restrained him. It seemed to him that he was crossing a river, and there on the opposite bank was his restlessness awaiting him in the form of an emaciated old slave, who, bowing low before him, said: "I came that I might meet you."

For the first time in his life Cinna was sore afraid, for he thought that inasmuch as he could not think of a future life lacking this restlessness, surely it would be there with him. As a last resource, he decided to approach the philosophers who swarmed in the Serapeum, thinking that perhaps they would solve the problem for him. They were unable to answer him. And they called him *ton mouscion*, a title they often gave to Romans of high birth and station. On the present occasion, however, this title was of very little consolation to him: the stamp of wisdom, given to one who was unable to answer a most vital question, seemed to Cinna ironical. Yet he thought the Serapeum might unveil its wisdom gradually, and he did not entirely lose hope.

Most active among the philosophers in Alexandria was the noble Timon the Athenian, a man of great wealth and a Roman citizen. He had lived for over a decade in Alexandria, where he came to study the Egyptian mysteries. It was said of him that there was not a manuscript or papyrus in the Bibliotheca which he had not read, and that he was possessed of all human wisdom. He was a man of pleasant and reasonable temperament. Out of a multitude of pedants and petty commentators, Cinna at once recognized his worth and associated with him; a relation that after a time ripened into close intimacy and even friendship. The young Roman admired his skill in dialectic, and the eloquence and logic with which the old man spoke of the sublime truths concerning the destiny of mankind and the world. It seemed also to Cinna that his reasoning was tinged with a certain melancholy. When their relations had grown closer, Cinna often desired to ask of the old man the cause of this melancholy, and at the same time to open his own heart to the philosopher. Somehow, in the end, he came to do so.

One evening, after a heated discussion on the question of the transmigration of souls, they remained alone on a terrace overlooking the sea; and Cinna, taking Timon by the hand, openly confessed to him the great torment of his life, and the cause that led him to seek communion with the scientists and philosophers of the Serapeum.

"At least I have gained this much," he said finally; "I have got to know thee, Timon, and now I am sure that if thou canst not solve the problem of my life, no one else can."

Timon, who had been watching the reflection of the new moon on the smooth surface of the sea, said:

"Seest thou, Cinna, the flocks of birds which come from the dreary north? Dost thou know what they seek in Egypt?"

"I know they seek warmth and light."

"The human soul also seeks warmth, which is love, and light, which is truth. The birds know whither to fly for their good; but the human soul flies in a desert; it is astray—a restless, melancholy wanderer."

"Noble Timon, why cannot the human soul find the way?"

"Of old, we found peace and rest in the gods; faith in the gods is now burned out, even as oil in a lamp. We thought that philosophy would be the temple of truth for human souls. To-day, as you yourself know best, on its ruins in Rome, in the Academy at Athens, and here, sit the sceptics. It appears to them that they have found peace, but they have only tasted unrest; for to renounce light and warmth is to leave the soul in that darkness which is restlessness. So with outstretched hands we seek freedom gropingly."

"Have you yourself discovered it?"

"I sought: I did not find it. Thou soughtest it in luxury, I in meditation, and both of us are circled by darkness. Know, therefore, that not only thou sufferest, but that in thee suffers the soul of the whole world. Long ago, doubtless, thou didst cease to believe in the gods."

"In Rome they still worship the gods publicly, and even fetch new ones from Asia and Egypt; but haply only the vegetable-sellers, who come from the country to the city in the morning, believe in and rely on them."

"And they alone are peaceful?"

"Just as they who here bow to cats and onions."

"Just as the animals who, after gorging themselves, desire sleep."

"In such a case is life worth living?"

"Do we know where death will bring us?"

"What then is the difference between the sceptics and you?"

"Sceptics accept the darkness, or they pretend to accept it; I am tortured in it."

"And you see no salvation?"

Timon remained silent for a time, then answered slowly and with a certain hesitation: "I wait for it."

"Whence?"

"I know not."

He leaned his head upon his hand; and as if influenced by the silence that reigned upon the terrace, he began to speak in a low, gentle voice.

"It is a wonderful thing, and it seems to me sometimes that if the world contained nothing more than that which we now know, and if we could be nothing more than that which we now are, restlessness would not be in us. Thus, in sickness we have the hope of health. Faith in Olympus and philosophy are dead, but perhaps some new truth which I know not is health."

Contrary to his expectation, this conversation brought great relief to Cinna. Learning that not only he, but the whole world, was weighed down with sin and sorrow, he felt as if a heavy load were lifted from his shoulders and were being shared by thousands of others.

III

FROM that time the friendship between Cinna and the old Greek became closer. They visited each other more frequently, and shared thoughts, as bread is divided at a feast. Although Cinna felt that sense of weariness which always follows enjoyment, he was still too young a man for life to lose all its attraction. And such an attraction he found in Anthea, the only daughter of Timon.

Her fame in Alexandria was not less than that of her father. She was adored by the Roman nobles who visited the house of Timon. She was adored by the Greeks, she was adored by the philosophers of the *Scrapæum*, she was adored by the people. Timon did not shut her up in the *gynæceum* like other women, and he carefully instructed her in all his knowledge. When she had passed childhood he read Greek with her, and even Latin and Hebrew. Being gifted with an extraordinary memory, and reared in polyglot Alexandria, she had learned to speak these languages fluently. She was the companion of his thoughts, and often took part in discussions, which during the symposia took place in the house of Timon. In the labyrinth of difficult problems she never lost herself, and, like

Ariadne, she safely led others out. Her father held her in great admiration and honour. And further, she was surrounded by a mysterious enchantment verging on holiness, for it was known that she had prophetic dreams and visions in which she saw things invisible to the eye of mortals. The old sage loved her as his own soul, and was afraid of losing her; for she often said that in her dreams there appeared a wondrous light, and she knew not whether it betokened the fountain of life or of death. Meanwhile Egyptians who visited the house of Timon called her the lotus, because that flower was worshipped on the banks of the Nile, or perhaps because he who saw her once might well forget the whole world. Her beauty was equal to her wisdom. Egyptian suns had not bronzed her face, in which the rosy light of dawn seemed to be enclosed in the transparency of a pearl shell. Her eyes were blue as the Nile, and her glance seemed to come from distance unknown as the springs of that mysterious river. When Cinna saw her and heard her for the first time, he felt moved to build an altar to her honour in the atrium of his house, and sacrifice white doves thereon. In his life he had met thousands of women, from the maidens of the far north, with white eyelashes and hair of the colour of ripe corn, to Numidians, black as lava; but until now he had never met such a form, nor such a soul. The more of her he saw, the better he knew her; the more he heard her speak, the greater grew his astonished admiration. Sometimes he who did not believe in the gods thought that Anthea could not be the daughter of Timon but of some god, and that she was half woman, half immortal.

Soon Cinna found that he loved her with a great and unconquerable love, as different from any feeling awakened before as Anthea was different from all other women. He wanted to possess her only to worship her. And for this he was ready to give his life. He felt that he would rather be a pauper with her than Cæsar without her. And as the vortex of an ocean whirlpool engulfs with its irresistible power all that approaches its circle, so Cinna's love absorbed his soul, his thoughts, his days, his nights, and all that composed his life.

At last this great love engulfed Anthea too.

"*Tu felix Cinna,*" said his friends to him. "*Tu felix Cinna,*" he repeated to himself. And when at last he wedded her, and her divine lips had uttered the sacramental words, "Where thou art, Caius, there am I, Caia;" then indeed it seemed to him that his happiness would be as an inexhaustible and limitless sea.

IV

A YEAR passed, and the young wife continued to receive honour and homage such as are accorded to one who is divine. She was to her husband as the apple of his eye—love, wisdom, light. But Cinna, comparing his happiness with the limitless sea, forgot that the sea ebbs and flows. After a year Anthea was afflicted with a cruel and unknown disease. Her dreams changed to terrible visions which drained her life. From her face there died the light of dawn, and there remained but the transparency of the pearly shell: her hands became translucent, her eyes dimmed, and the rosy lotus became white as a marble statue. It was observed that buzzards hovered over Cinna's house—always in Egypt an omen of death. Her terrifying visions increased. When in the midday hours the sun flooded the world with its brilliant whiteness, and the city was sunk in silence, it appeared to Anthea that she heard around her the quick steps of some invisible beings; and that in the depths of the air she saw a dry, yellow, corpse-like face, looking down on her with piercing black eyes that called her to follow somewhere into a darkness, full of mystery and terror. Then Anthea began to tremble as one in a fever, her forehead became pallid and glistened with a cold sweat, and the worshipped priestess of the fireside changed into a defenceless and frightened child, who, hiding herself on her husband's breast, repeated with whitened lips, "Save me, Caius! defend me!"

Caius was ready to fight these phantoms from the subterranean caves of Proserpine, but vainly his eyes searched space. As usual at the hour of noon the place was deserted, the sea burned in the sun, and in the silence only the cry of the buzzards was heard circling over the house.

The visions became more frequent; till finally they occurred daily. They pursued Anthea no less outside the house than in the atrium and living-rooms. Cinna, by the advice of the physicians, brought Egyptian minstrels and Bedouins to play on porcelain flutes, so that their noisy music might drown the voices of the invisible beings. But all was of no avail. Anthea heard the voices in spite of the greatest noise, and when the sun was so high in the heavens that shadows lay around one's feet, as a robe dropped from the shoulders, there in the heated, trembling air appeared the corpse-like face gazing on Anthea with its beady eyes, receding slowly, as if saying, "Follow me."

Sometimes it seemed to Anthea as if the lips of the corpse moved. Sometimes it seemed that from them there issued black repulsive beetles, that flew towards her through the air. The very memory of this vision filled her with terror, and in the end life became so great a torment that she implored Cinna to hold his sword so that she might fall upon it; or to let her drink poison.

This he could not, would not do. He was willing to let out his own life's blood with his sword, but kill her he could not. When he imagined her dead face, with closed eyelids, pale in the quict of death, and her breast torn with his sword, he felt that before killing her he must first become mad.

A certain Greek physician told him that it was Hecate who had appeared to Anthea, and that those invisible beings whose rustlings terrified her belonged to the band of that baneful divinity. According to him there was no help for her, since all who saw Hecate must die.

Then Cinna, who not long ago would have sneered at faith in Hecate, offered to this goddess the sacrifice of a hecatomb. But the offering availed not, and the next day the spectral eyes again appeared to Anthea.

They tried to veil her head, but she saw the corpse-like face through the thickest covering. When she was confined in a darkened room the face looked upon her from the walls, dispelling the darkness with pale, ghost-like phosphorescence. In the evening the patient felt better: then she lapsed into such a profound sleep that it seemed to both Cinna and Timon that she would never wake again. Soon she grew so weak that she could not walk unassisted. They carried her in a litter.

The old restlessness of Cinna returned with force a hundred-fold, and took possession of him completely. There was in him a great fear for Anthea's life, and a strange feeling that, somehow or other, her sickness bore a mysterious relation to those insoluble problems which he had discussed with Timon in their first serious conversation. It may have been that the sage thought likewise, but Cinna did not wish, indeed was afraid, to question him about it. Meanwhile the patient was fading like a flower whose cup harbours a poisonous spider.

Cinna, battling with despair, yet tried all means to save her. First, he carried her to the plains near Memphis; but when the deep silence of the pyramids did not relieve her, he returned to Alexandria and surrounded her with fortune-tellers and magicians, soothsayers, and a motley crowd of humbugs who

duped the credulous with their miraculous nostrums. Having no choice, he grasped at every means in sight.

At this time there arrived in Alexandria from Cæsarea, a famous Jewish physician by name of Joseph, son of Khuza. Cinna brought him at once to his wife, and for a moment hope returned to his heart. Joseph, who did not believe in the Greek and Roman gods, discarded with derision every whisper of Hecate. He contended that it was a demon that possessed the patient, and advised them to leave Egypt, where, besides demons, the miasma of the swampy Delta impaired her health. He advised also, perhaps for the reason that he was a Jew, that they should go to Jerusalem, a city to which demons have no access, and where the air is dry and healthy.

Cinna the more willingly followed this advice, first, because he had no other advice to follow; and secondly, that over Jerusalem ruled a Procurator who was known to him, and whose ancestors in the olden time had been clients of the house of Cinna.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, the Procurator, Pontius Pilate, received them with great hospitality, and lent them his summer villa near the walls of the city, in which to live. Even before his arrival the hope of Cinna was shattered. The corpse-like face looked on Anthea even on the deck of the ship, and after their arrival at their destination the patient awaited the hour of noon with the same deadly fear as aforetime in Alexandria.

Thus their days passed in depression, fear, despair, and expectation of death.

v

IN the atrium, despite the fountain near by, the shady portico, and the early hour, it was intensely hot; the marble radiated the heat of the vernal sun, and close by the house grew an old and large pistachio-tree, which threw its shade over a great space. The breeze played in the open, and Cinna commanded that a chair, decked with hyacinths and apple-blossoms, should be placed under the tree for Anthea. Then seating himself by her side he laid his palm on her white and wasted hand, and said:

"Is it good for thee here, carissima?"

"It is good," answered she in a faint voice.

She closed her eyes as if sleeping lightly. Silence fell: the breeze sighed through the branches of the pistachio-tree, and on the space around played golden circlets of light falling through the leaves, and the locusts chirped in the crevices of the stones.

After a while the patient opened her eyes.

"Caius," she said, "is it true that in this land there has arisen a philosopher who heals the sick?"

"Here they call him a prophet," answered Cinna. "I had heard of him and intended to call him to thee, but it appears that he is a false miracle-worker. Besides, he has blasphemed against the temple and the law of the land; therefore Pontius Pilate has given him up to death, and to-day he will be crucified."

Anthea bowed her head.

"Time will heal thee," said Cinna, seeing her sorrow, which was reflected on his face.

"Time is in the service of death, not life," answered she slowly.

Again silence fell; around her the golden circlets constantly played, the locusts chirped still louder, and from the crevices of the rocks glided small lizards and chameleons in search of sunny corners.

Cinna's gaze rested tenderly on Anthea, and for the thousandth time despairing thoughts passed through his mind: that all means of help were exhausted, that not a spark of hope remained, and that soon this loved form would become only a fleeting shadow and a handful of dust immured in a columbarium.

Reclining there in the blossom-covered chair, she looked as if death had claimed her for his own.

"I will follow thee too," thought Cinna.

Suddenly the sound of approaching footsteps was heard. Anthea's face at once became deadly white, her half-parted lips moved convulsively, her breast heaved quickly:—the unhappy victim felt that it was the band of her invisible tormentors, which always heralded the appearance of the hideous corpse with glaring eyes. But Cinna, taking her hand, reassured her, saying:

"Anthea, fear not. I also hear the footsteps."

And then he added:

"This is Pontius, coming to visit us."

And in fact there appeared at a turn of the path the Procurator, accompanied by two slaves. He was not a young man. His round, carefully shaven face showed an expression of authority together with an air of weariness.

"I salute thee, noble Cinna, and thee, divine Anthea!" said he, entering under the shade of the pistachio. "After the cool night the day is now warm. May it bring good fortune to you both; may the health of Anthea blossom as the hyacinths and apple-blossoms that adorn her chair!"

"Peace to thee, and welcome," answered Cinna.

The Procurator, seating himself upon a fragment of rock, looked at Anthea anxiously and said:

"Loneliness gives birth to melancholy and sickness, and in the midst of crowds one cannot be afraid, so I will give thee counsel. For our misfortune this is neither Antioch nor Cæsarea, there are no gladiatorial contests nor races, and if a circus should appear these fanatics would destroy it on the second day. Here you hear only the one word, 'law,' and this 'law' opposes everything. I would rather be in Scythia than here."

"Of what speakest thou, Pilate?"

"True it is, I have wandered from my theme. But my troubles are the cause of it. I said that in the midst of crowds there was no place for fear. To-day you have a chance of witnessing a spectacle. In Jerusalem we ought to be satisfied with what we can get; and, above all, it is necessary that at noontime Anthea shall be in the crowd. To-day three men will die on the cross. It is better to see this than to see nothing. Besides, on account of the Passover, there has gathered in the city a strange, grotesque crowd of religious fanatics from all over the country; you can observe them. I will have a good position reserved for you near the crosses. I hope the condemned men will die bravely. One of them is a strange being: he says he is the Son of God. He is as mild as a dove, and truly has done nothing for which he deserves death."

"And thou condemnest him to the cross?"

"I wish to wash my hands of trouble, and not to arouse the nest of hornets that swarm around the temple. They are sending complaints to Rome about me! Why trouble about one who is not a Roman citizen?"

"He will not suffer the less on that account."

The Procurator did not answer, but presently he began to speak as if to himself: "There is one thing I do not like; that is, extremism. When that is thrust on me it robs me of my pleasure for the whole day. The golden mean, according to my opinion, is what common sense commands us to observe. There is no place in the world where this principle is more neglected than here. How it all tortures me! There is no quietness, no calm, either in man or nature. For instance, now it is spring and the nights are cold, and yet in the daytime it is so hot that one cannot walk on the stones. As for the people—let us not speak of them. I am here since I cannot help it—

why speak of it? I am again wandering from the subject. Go and see the crucifixion. I am sure this Nazarene will die bravely. I ordered him to be scourged, thinking by this to save him from death. I am not a cruel man. When he was scourged he was as patient as a lamb, and blessed the people. When his blood was dripping, he lifted his eyes upwards and prayed. He is the most wonderful man I have seen in my life. My wife gave me no peace, not one moment's rest: from early dawn she said constantly, 'Do not let the innocent die.' I wished to save him. Twice I ascended the platform and addressed the fanatical priests and the unclean crowd. They clamoured with one voice, throwing back their heads and opening their mouths from ear to ear, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'"

"And thou didst yield?" said Cinna.

"Because in the city there would have been turbulence and rioting, and I am here to preserve peace. I must do my duty. I do not like excess, and besides I am tired of it all; but when I once decide to do something I do not hesitate to sacrifice the life of one man for the general good, especially if he be an unknown man about whom none will inquire. It is unfortunate for him that he is not a Roman citizen."

"The sun shines not over Rome alone," whispered Anthea.

"Divine Anthea," replied the Procurator, "over this whole earth the sun shines on the Roman Empire, and for its good it behoves us to sacrifice all. Riots undermine our dignity. But before all, I pray thee, do not ask of me that I shall change my decree. Cinna will tell thee also that it cannot be, and when a decree is once promulgated Cæsar alone could change it. Even if I desired I could not. Is not that the truth, Caius?"

"It is so"

To Anthea these words caused a visible agitation, and she said, thinking perhaps of herself:

"So then, it is possible to suffer and die without guilt."

"No one is without guilt," answered Pontius. "This Nazarene did not commit any crime; therefore as Procurator I washed my hands. But as a man I condemned his doctrine. I conversed with him freely, desiring to examine him, and I was convinced he proclaimed unheard-of things. It is difficult! The world must stand on cool reason. Who denies that virtue is needed? Certainly not I. But only the stoics teach us to bear adversity with serenity, and they do not require us to renounce everything from our estates to our dinner. Cinna, thou art a

reasonable man. What wouldst thou think of me if I should give this house in which thou livest to the ragged beggars who sun themselves at the city gates? And this is what he requires. Again, he says that we should love all people equally; Jews equally with Romans, Romans as Egyptians, Egyptians as Africans. I confess I have had enough of it. At the critical time when I spoke with him he did not seem concerned about his life, but behaved as if the question concerned someone else; he was preaching and praying. I am not called upon to save a man who cares little for himself. Then, he calls himself the Son of God, and destroys the foundation upon which the world rests, and therefore harms men. Let him think what he pleases in his own mind, but he must not preach it. As a man I protest against his doctrine. If I do not believe, for instance, in the gods, that is my affair. Yet I acknowledge the need of religion, and announce it publicly, since I recognize that religion is a bridle for the people. The horses must be securely fastened. Besides, to this Nazarene death should have no terrors, for he affirms that he will rise from the dead."

Cinna and Anthea looked at each other with astonishment.

"That he will rise from the dead?"

"No more, no less—after three days. So at least his disciples announce. I forgot to ask him; but that is of little consequence, as death frees us from all promises. Even if he does not rise from the dead, he will lose nothing, for according to his teachings true happiness and life eternal begin only after death. Verily, he speaks of it as one who is certain. His Hades is more bright than our sunny world, and the more one suffers here, the more surely will he enter there; he must only love, love, and love."

"A wonderful doctrine!" said Anthea.

"And they clamoured to thee, 'Crucify him!'?" queried Cinna.

"I do not wonder: hatred is the soul of these people. What then, if not hatred, would clamour for the cross? Love?"

Anthea placed her wasted hand upon her forehead.

"And is he sure that we will live and be happy—after death?"

"On this account neither cross nor death affrights him."

"How good that would be, Cinna!"

She shortly asked again:

"How does he know all this?"

The Procurator, making a dissenting gesture with his hand, answered:

"He says that he knows it from the Father of all men, who

is to the Jews as Jupiter is to us, with this difference, according to the Nazarene, that He is One alone and all-merciful."

"How good that would be, Cinna!" sighed Anthea.

Cinna opened his lips as if he would speak, but remained silent, and the conversation ceased.

Pontius evidently meditated further on the strange teaching of the Nazarene, for he shook his head protestingly, and at intervals shrugged his shoulders. At last he rose and began to say farewell.

Suddenly Anthea said:

"Caius, let us go hence and see this Nazarene."

"Hasten," said the departing Pontius; "soon the procession will start."

VI

THE day, which in the morning had been hot and clear, was overcast at noon. From the north-east came dark, coppery clouds, not yet very large, but ominous and pregnant with storm. Between them were glimpses of the blue sky, but it could easily be foreseen that soon the clouds would meet and join, veiling the horizon. Meanwhile the sun tinged their rims with golden fire. Over the city itself, and the adjoining hills, was still outstretched an expanse of blue, and beneath it the wind was still.

On a high plateau called Golgotha stood small groups of people who had come in advance of the procession. The sun shone on the wide rocky spaces, desolate, barren, and melancholy. The grey, monotonous colour was interrupted here and there by a black net of crags and fissures, which seemed more black in contrast with the brightness of the sunshine-flooded plateau. Far away were seen higher hills, equally desolate, veiled in the blue mist of the distance.

Lower, between the walls of the city and the plateau of Golgotha, lay a plain, broken with terraces of rock, but less barren. From the fissures of the rocks in which rich loam had collected grew fig-trees, with leaves scarce and poor. Occasionally there were seen buildings fastened like swallows' nests to the rocks, or white-painted tombs glistening in the sunlight. The influx of people from the country for the holy days had caused multitudes of huts and tents to spring up close to the walls of the city, in the form of camps, full of men and camels. The sun rose higher and higher in the clear space of the sky. The hour was approaching when deep silence reigns on the

hills, and all nature seeks the shade. And even now, in striking contrast to the living crowds, sorrow seemed to brood over this place where the blinding light fell not on green turf, but on masses of grey desolate rock. The murmur of far-distant voices, coming from the walls, changed into the ripple of waves, and seemed to be absorbed in the silence.

The scattered groups of people, who from early morn had waited on Golgotha, now turned their faces towards the city, whence the procession was expected to start every moment.

Anthea arrived, carried in a litter, and escorted by soldiers sent by the Procurator to clear the way and protect her against the fanatical crowds, haters of all things foreign. Near the litter walked Cinna, together with the centurion Rufilus.

Anthea was quieter and less terrified at the approach of the noontime that threatened her with those frightful visions which sapped her life. Remembrance of what the Procurator had said to her of the young Nazarene absorbed her thoughts, and turned her attention away from her own misery. It all seemed wonderful to her, and she could not understand. In her world men died as quietly as the funeral pyre dies when the fuel is burnt out. But their peace arose from courage, or from a philosophical indifference to the unheeding fates; their light seemed changing into darkness; true life into some misty, fantastic, and indescribable existence. Until now, no one had blessed death, no one died with any absolute certainty that after the pyre or the grave there began an existence so mighty and infinite that only a being all-powerful and omnipotent could grant it.

Yet he who was to be crucified had announced this as an undoubted truth. The doctrine not only impressed Anthea, but seemed to her now the only fountain of hope and consolation. She knew that this man must die, and a great sympathy for him filled her soul. What was death to her? It was abandonment of Cinna, abandonment of her father, abandonment of the world and love; emptiness, coldness, nothingness, gloom. Sweet was life to her after all; bitter were her regrets at leaving it. If death could be of some avail, or if it could be possible to take with one even the memory of love, she would then more easily be resigned to the inevitable. Suddenly, expecting nothing from death, she learns that death can give her all. And who proclaims this? Some wonderful man—a teacher, a philosopher, a prophet—who commends love as the highest virtue; who,

while suffering agonies under the lash, blesses the persecutors who are about to crucify him. So Anthea thought: "Why did he so teach, if the cross is his only reward? Others desired power—he cared naught for it; others desired property—he remained poor; others desired palaces, feasts, luxuries, purple robes, chariots inlaid with mother-of-pearl and ivory—he lived as a shepherd. He commended love, pity, poverty: he could not therefore be bad, or purposely mislead others. If what he spoke was truth, then blessed be death as an end of earthly misery, as a change from a lesser to a greater and better happiness; as a light to fading eyes, as wings with which to fly to unending peace." Anthea understood now what assurance of the resurrection meant.

The mind and heart of the poor sufferer eagerly clung to this doctrine. She recalled the words of her father, who had often said that some new truth only could ever free the tortured human soul from darkness and chains. And lo! here was a new truth. It defeated death; therefore it brought salvation. Anthea's whole being was so submerged in these thoughts that Cinna, for the first time during many days, failed to observe terror on her face in apprehension of the approaching hour of noon.

The procession had at last started from the city for Golgotha, and could be plainly seen from the eminence upon which Anthea lay. The multitude of people was large, but, in contrast with the vast plain, seemed small. From the open gates of the city the crowd kept pouring, and the number was being augmented by those waiting outside the walls. First appeared a long file, which widened like a river as it proceeded. At its flanks ran swarms of children. The procession was spotted with the white garments and scarlet and blue headdresses of the women. In the midst glittered the bright armour and spears of the Roman cohort, reflecting the fleeting rays of the sun. The murmur of many voices came from afar and grew more and more distinct.

At last they approached nearer, and the foremost ranks began ascending the hill. The crowd hurried up to secure good places, so that they might the better view the spectacle, thus leaving in the rear the company of soldiers who guarded the condemned. First to arrive were half-naked children, mostly boys, with heads closely cropped, save for two locks of hair in front; blue-eyed, swarthy, and loud-voiced, their loins covered only by a cloth. With wild uproar they tore out from the crevices loose pieces of rock with which to stone the condemned. Behind them the hill

swarmed with the rabble, with faces expressive of fierce expectation without a trace of pity. Anthea, although accustomed to the animated speech of the Greeks of Alexandria, was astounded at the loud, sharp tones of the voices of this crowd, the volubility of their cries, and their wild, excited gestures and actions. They seemed as if about to engage in a fight, shouting as if their lives were at stake, and wrangling with each other as if in danger of being torn limb from limb.

The centurion, Rufilus, approached the litter and quietly gave some instructions to the soldiers. Meanwhile, from the city the crowds grew in number like the waves of the sea, and the pressure increased every minute. The multitude included well-to-do citizens of Jerusalem, clothed in striped robes, who kept aloof from the mob of the slums; numerous husbandmen, accompanied by their families, who had come to the city for the holy days; labourers whose loins were clad in sackcloth, and herdsmen clad in goatskins, with good-natured wonderment depicted on their faces. There, also, were many women; but, as the upper class remained at home, these were mostly women of the people, the wives of husbandmen and labourers, or the women of the street, arrayed in flaming colours, with dyed hair and eyebrows, tinted finger nails and carmined cheeks, scented with nard which filled the air afar; and adorned with large earrings and necklaces of coins. The Sanhedrin at last arrived, and in its midst walked Hanaan, an old man with the face of a vulture and red eyelids; and the high priest Caiaphas, with a two-cornered headdress and golden breastplate. With them went members of different sects of Pharisees: the "toot draggers," who stumbled purposely at every obstacle; the "bleeding heads," who struck their heads against the walls; the "bowed backs," who pretended to be weighed down with the sins of the whole city. Their ascetic gloom and rigorous countenances distinguished them from the noisy crowd of the common people.

Cinna regarded the multitude with the cold, proud glance of the dominant class; Anthea with surprise and alarm. Many Jews lived in Alexandria, but were there half Hellenes, here she saw them for the first time, as described by Pilate and as they indeed were, in their own nest. Her young face on which death had already set its seal and her shadowy form attracted attention. They eyed her as persistently as the soldiers surrounding her litter would allow. So great was their hatred and abhorrence of all foreigners that their faces showed no pity,

but rather joy at her deathlike appearance; and she now understood why these men clamoured to crucify a prophet and preacher of love.

Suddenly it seemed to her that this Nazarene was very near and dear to her. He must die and so must she. Naught could save him after the decree of death was issued, and now her own decree was irrevocable. So it seemed to Anthea that they were joined together in the bond of suffering and of death. He was going to the cross with a sublime faith in the hereafter; while she, possessing none, had come here to view him, hoping thereby to obtain it. Meanwhile, from afar spread the wild, howling tumult, suddenly dying into deep silence. Then was heard the clank of armour and the heavy tramp of the legionaries. The crowd wavered, opened; and the body of soldiers preceding the condemned began to file past the litter. From the front, sides, and rear marched the soldiers, with regular and even tread; and in the middle could be seen, borne aloft, the timber for three crosses, carried by three men bent under their weight. It was easy to see that none of these three was the Nazarene, for two of them had the shameless and unabashed faces of criminals, and the third was a middle-aged countryman whom the soldiers had forced to be a substitute. The Nazarene walked behind the crosses, having a guard of two soldiers. Around His shoulders and over His robe was placed a purple mantle, and on His head a crown of thorns, from under whose sharp points exuded drops of blood. Some drops were trickling down His face, and some had hardened into globules like the red berries of the wild rose or like beads. He was pale and walked with slow and wavering steps. Amid the jeers of the crowd He moved unconsciously, as if rapt in contemplation, unheeding their cries of hate and derision; forgiving and compassionate beyond the measure of human forgiveness and compassion; because already He, encompassed by infinity, was exalted above this human sphere; full of peace; sorrowful only over its sin and sorrow.

"Thou art truth," whispered Anthea, with trembling lips.

The procession was now passing close to the litter. There was a moment when it stopped to allow the soldiers to clear a way through the mob. Then Anthea saw the Nazarene standing a few paces off. She saw how the breeze played with the locks of His hair, saw on His pale, translucent face the purple reflection from His mantle. The crowd pressed eagerly forward to reach Him, forming a narrow semicircle around the soldiers, who were

compelled to make a barrier with their spears to defend Him from its rage. Everywhere arms were stretched forth, clenched fists, glaring eyes, gleaming teeth, bristling beards, and foaming lips vomiting forth hoarse imprecations on His head. He glanced round as if saying, "What have I done to thee?" lifting His eyes to heaven as though He prayed and forgave them.

"Anthea! Anthea!" at this moment came from Cinna.

Anthea heard him not. Great tears welled up in her eyes and flowed down her cheeks. She forgot her illness; she forgot that for days she had not moved from her litter; and rising suddenly, trembling, and half unconscious, full of sorrow, compassion, and indignation at the blind clamours of the crowd, she hurriedly plucked the hyacinths and apple-blossoms from her litter, and cast them at the feet of the Nazarene.

For a moment there was silence. The crowd was astounded at the spectacle of this high-born Roman lady thus honouring a condemned man. He rested His gaze on her pale, suffering face, and His lips moved as if blessing her. Anthea, falling on the pillows of the litter, felt flowing in upon her a sea of light, goodness, mercy, comfort, hope, happiness, and she whispered again:

"Thou art truth."

Again the tears welled up within her and flowed afresh.

The Nazarene was pushed forward a number of paces, to where already stood the upright timbers of the crosses, securely fixed in the fissures of the rocks. For a moment the crowd obstructed her view, but as the place where the crosses were erected was on higher ground, she again saw His pale face, crowned with the crown of thorns. The soldiers again drove back the crowds with the butt ends of their spears, so that they might not interfere with the execution. They now commenced to fasten the two thieves on the crosses. The third cross stood in the middle, with a white tablet nailed to the top, shaking and rattling in the rising wind. When the soldiers approached the Nazarene to disrobe Him, the crowd shouted mockingly: "King! king! surrender not thyself! King! where are now thy hosts? Defend thyself!" - and then burst forth a mighty derisive laugh, which was taken up and echoed by the rocky hills. Meanwhile the soldiers had stretched Him on the ground in order to nail His hands to the cross-piece, and then together with it to raise Him to the upright timber.

At this instant a man, dressed in a white cloak, who was

standing near Anthea's litter, threw himself on the ground, cast dust on his head, and wailed forth with despairing voice:

"I was a leper—He healed me—why crucify Him?"

The face of Anthea became white as linen.

"He healed him! Dost thou hear, Caius?" she said.

"Dost thou wish to return?" asked Cinna.

"No, I shall remain here."

Cinna was now filled with a wild and immeasurable despair, because he had not besought the Nazarene to heal Anthea.

At this moment the soldiers placed the nails against the palms of His hands, and began to strike. The crowd again became quiet, the better to hear the cries which they expected the pain to wring from the lips of the Nazarene. But He remained silent, and naught could be heard save the ominous strokes of the hammer. At last they finished the work and the cross-piece, together with the body, was raised up. The centurion, who was watching their work, sang out monotonous words of command. Meanwhile the clouds, which since morning had been spreading over the horizon, obscured the sun. The distant rocks and hills disappeared. The earth darkened as if before night. An ominous copper-coloured gloom covered the land, and became deeper and deeper, as the sun sank farther behind the sombre banks of clouds. It seemed as if some power above were spreading a red darkness over the earth. Anon came a hot gust of wind—once—twice—then stopped. The air became stifling, and suddenly the remnant of ruddy gleams darkened; clouds, dismal as night, rolled as a gigantic wall toward the plain, and the city. The storm was rising.

"Let us return," repeated Cinna.

"I must see Him again," answered Anthea.

As the darkness obscured the hanging bodies, Cinna commanded the litter to be brought nearer. They approached so near the place of suffering that only a few steps separated them from the cross. On the dark tree was seen the white body of the Crucified, which in the gathering gloom looked as if woven of silvery moonbeams.

From out of the clouds there issued a low, deep, rumbling murmur. The thunder awoke and rolled with a terrific crash from east to west, and then, as if falling into the bottomless pit, resounded lower and lower, weaker and louder; and in the end the thunderbolt exploded with a deafening report, which shook the earth to its foundations.

Lurid, blue lightning tore through the clouds, illuminating heaven and earth, the crosses, the soldiers' armour, the mob huddled like a flock of sheep, restless and frightened.

After the lightning, darkness deepened.

Near the litter could be heard the weeping of many women, who had striven to approach the cross. Those who had been separated by the crowd began to hail each other; and here and there frightened voices were heard.

"Is not the Just crucified?"

"Who gave witness to the truth?"

"Who raised the dead?"

Another cried:

"Woe to thee, O Jerusalem!"

Another again:

"The earth trembleth!"

The second flashes of lightning opened the depths of heaven, and showed in the heights Titanic fiery figures. The voices were silenced, or rather died away in the whistling of the wind, which suddenly arose with mighty force tearing headresses and mantles from the multitude, and scattering them broadcast. The multitude again cried: "The earth trembleth!" Some began to run; others, riveted to the spot with terror, stood stupefied, senseless, with the dull impression only of terror.

The darkness began to redden. The storm rolled in the clouds, turning them over and tearing them into fragments. The light gradually increased, the dark dome of the heavens opened, and through the rift suddenly poured a stream of bright sunlight. It made everything visible—the plateau, the frightened faces, and the crosses.

The head of the Nazarene had fallen on. His breast, pale, and waxen; His eyelids were closed and His lips were blue.

"He is dead," whispered Anthea.

"He is dead," repeated Cinna.

At this moment the centurion raised his spear, and pierced His side. The return of light and the sight of death seemed to quiet the crowd. Now the people approached the cross, the soldiers not hindering them. Now there were heard voices:

"Descend from the cross! descend from the cross!"

Anthea fixing her eyes once more on the pale, reclining head, whispered as if to herself:

"Will He rise from the dead?"

In the presence of death, which had set its blue mark on His

eyes and lips; in the presence of those outstretched arms; in the presence of this motionless body, hanging downward with a dead weight; her voice trembled with doubt and despair.

No less a sorrow dragged at the heart of Cinna. He also did not believe that the Nazarene would rise from the dead; but he did believe that if He had lived, He, with His good or evil power, could have healed Anthea.

Meanwhile many of the multitude clamoured again:

"Descend from the cross! descend from the cross!"

"Descend!" repeated Cinna, in the despair of his soul; "heal her for me, and take my life for her."

It grew brighter. The hills were still in mist, but over the plain and city the sky was bright. "Turris Antonia" blazed in the sky, as if it were itself a sun. The air became fresh and swarmed with swallows. Cinna gave the word to return.

The hour was after noonday. Near the house, Anthea said suddenly:

"Hecate did not come to-day."

Cinna had also thought of this.

VII

Nor did the haunting spectre appear the next day. The patient was more cheerful than usual. Timon arrived from Cæsarea. Anxious for his daughter's life, and alarmed by Cinna's letters, he had a few days before left Alexandria, to behold once more his only child before death claimed her. To Cinna's heart hope came again, knocking for admittance. He dared not open the door to this guest; he feared to hope. Never before, for two days in succession, had there been a cessation of those visions which tortured Anthea, though they had ceased for one day at Alexandria, and once in the desert. The present improvement Cinna ascribed to the arrival of Timon and the impression of the crucifixion, which so filled the thoughts of the patient, that even in the presence of her father she could speak of naught else.

Timon listened with great attention, contradicted not, pondered deeply, and seriously inquired into the Nazarene's doctrine, of which Anthea knew only what Pontius had told her.

She felt better and somewhat stronger; and when noon came and went, true hope shone in her eyes. Several times she called this day fortunate, and asked her husband to record it.

The day was indeed sombre and gloomy. The rain fell all the morning, copiously at first, then in a lesser degree, until it drizzled out of the low overhanging clouds. In the evening these lifted; and the great fiery globe of the sun looked out of the mist, painted the clouds with purple and gold, the grey rocks, the white portico of the villa, and amid glorious colours sank below the horizon into the Mediterranean.

The day following prophesied heat; but the morning was fresh, the sky cloudless, and the air so steeped in a blue bath that everything seemed to be blue. Anthea asked that she might be carried beneath the favourite pistachio-tree, so that from the eminence upon which it stood she might drink in the view of the joyful expanse. Cinna and Timon did not leave the side of the litter for an instant, anxiously watching the face of the invalid. It bore an expression of wistful expectancy; but there was an absence of that dreaded terror which formerly used to seize her just before the approach of midday. Her eyes were clear and bright, and her cheeks were mantled with a delicate rosy flush. At moments Cinna indeed thought that Anthea might regain her health, and at this thought he felt like throwing himself on the ground and blessing the gods. On the other hand, fear possessed him that this might be only the last glimmer of the flickering lamp. Desiring to gain some assurance from Timon he looked at him, but like thoughts were passing in his mind, and he avoided Cinna's gaze, who, watching the shadows, saw with beating heart that they grew shorter and shorter.

The least perturbed of all was Anthea herself. Reclining in the open litter, with her head resting on the purple pillow, she breathed with joy the pure air which the western breeze bore from the sea. Before noon this breeze fell. The heat became greater; warmed by the sun, the wild flowers of the rocks and the bushes of nard exhaled a strong and intoxicating fragrance. Over the clusters of anemones hovered bright butterflies. Small lizards, which had already become accustomed to the litter and the people, stole out of the fissures of the rocks; venturing, as usual, one after another, yet timid and cautious in every movement.

Timon and Cinna alike seemed sunk in this profound peace. Anthea closed her eyes as if drifting into slumber; the silence was unbroken save by her faint sighs.

Cinna observed that his shadow had shortened and lay at his

feet. It was noon. Anthea slowly opened her eyes and broke the silence, saying in a strange tone:

"Cinna, give me thy hand."

Cinna started to her side; the blood congealed in his veins as if his heart were ice: the hour for the terrible vision had come.

Her eyes opened wider.

"Seest thou," she said, "over there, a light, gathering and forming in the air? See how it shines, trembles, and approaches me!"

"Anthea! look not there!" exclaimed Cinna.

Wonderful! No terror appeared on her face; her lips parted slightly, her eyes widened, and a measureless joy illuminated her face.

"The pillar of light approaches me," she said. "I see; it is He, it is the Nazarene!—He smiles!—Oh, sweet!—Oh, merciful!—As a mother He stretches forth to me His pierced hands. Cinna! He brings me health, salvation. He calls me unto Him."

Cinna, becoming very pale, said:

"Whithersoever He calleth us, let us follow Him."

A moment later, from the other side on the stony path leading to the town, Pontius Pilate appeared. Before he drew near they could see from his face that he was the bearer of some tidings which, as a reasonable man, he considered to be some new invention of the credulous and ignorant crowds. Although still far away, he began calling out, as he wiped the sweat from his brow:

"Imagine what they are saying now: that He has risen from the dead."

THE END

EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY

By ERNEST RHYS

VICTOR HUGO said a Library was 'an act of faith,' and another writer spoke of one so beautiful, so perfect, so harmonious in all its parts, that he who made it was smitten with a passion. In that faith Everyman's Library was planned out originally on a large scale; and the idea was to make it conform as far as possible to a perfect scheme. However, perfection is a thing to be aimed at and not to be achieved in this difficult world; and since the first volumes appeared there have been many interruptions, chief among them Wars, during which even the City of Books feels the great commotion. But the series always gets back into its old stride.

One of the practical expedients in the original plan was to divide the volumes into separate sections, as Biography, Fiction, History, Belles-lettres, Poetry, Philosophy, Romance, and so forth; with a shelf for Young People. The largest slice of this huge provision of nearly a thousand volumes is, as a matter of course, given to the tyrannous demands of fiction. But in carrying out the scheme, publishers and editors contrived to keep in mind that books, like men and women, have their elective affinities. The present volume, for instance, will be found to have its companion books, both in the same class and

not less significantly in other sections. With that idea too, novels like Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and *Fortunes of Nigel*, Lytton's *Harold*, and Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*, have been used as pioneers of history and treated as a sort of holiday history books. For in our day history is tending to grow more documentary and less literary; and 'the historian who is a stylist,' as one of our contributors, the late Thomas Seccombe, said, 'will soon be regarded as a kind of Phoenix.'

As for history, Everyman's Library has been eclectic enough to choose its historians from every school in turn, including Gibbon, Grote, Finlay, Macaulay, Motley, and Prescott, while among earlier books may be found the Venerable Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. On the classic shelf too, there is a Livy in an admirable translation by Canon Roberts, and Caesar, Tacitus, Thucydides, and Herodotus are not forgotten.

'You only, O Books,' said Richard de Bury, 'are liberal and independent; you give to all who ask.' The variety of authors old and new, the wisdom and the wit at the disposal of Everyman in his own Library, may even, at times, seem all but embarrassing. In the Essays, for instance, he may turn to Dick Steele in *The Spectator* and learn how Cleonira dances, when the elegance of her motion is unimaginable and 'her eyes are chastised with the simplicity and innocence of her thoughts.' Or he may take *A Century of Essays*, as a key to a whole roomful of the English Essayists, from Bacon to Addison, Elia to Augustine Birrell. These are the golden gossips of literature, the writers who learnt the delightful art of talking on paper. Or again, the reader who has the right spirit and looks on all literature as a great adventure may dive back into the classics, and in Plato's *Phaedrus* read how every soul is divided into three parts (like Caesar's Gaul). The poets next, and he may turn to the finest critic of Victorian times, Matthew Arnold, as their showman,

and find in his essay on Maurice de Guérin a clue to the 'magical power of poetry,' as in Shakespeare, with his

daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.

Hazlitt's *Table Talk* may help us again to discover the relationship of author to author, which is another form of the Friendship of Books. His incomparable essay, 'On Going a Journey,' is a capital prelude to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*; and so throughout the long labyrinth of the Library shelves one can follow the magic clue in prose or verse that leads to the hidden treasury. In that way a reader becomes his own critic and Doctor of Letters, and may turn to the Byron review in Macaulay's *Essays* as a prelude to the three volumes of Byron's own poems, remembering that the poet whom Europe loved more than England did was, as Macaulay said, 'the beginning, the middle and the end of all his own poetry.' This brings us to the provoking reflection that it is the obvious authors and the books most easy to reprint which have been the signal successes out of the many hundreds in the series, for Everyman is distinctly proverbial in his tastes. He likes best of all an old author who has worn well or a comparatively new author who has gained something like newspaper notoriety. In attempting to lead him on from the good books that are known to those that are less known, the publishers may have at times been even too adventurous. But the elect reader is or ought to be a party to this conspiracy of books and bookmen. He can make it possible, by his help and his co-operative zest, to add still more authors, old and new. 'Infinite riches in a little room,' as the saying is, will be the reward of every citizen who helps year by year to build the City of Books. With such a belief in its possibilities the old Chief (J. M. Dent)

threw himself into the enterprise. With the zeal of a true book-lover, he thought that books might be alive and productive as dragons' teeth, which, being 'sown up and down the land, might chance to spring up armed men.' That is a great idea, and it means a fighting campaign in which every new reader who buys a volume, counts as a recruit.

To him all books which lay
Their sure foundation in the heart of man . . .
From Homer the great Thunderer, to the voice
That roars along the bed of Jewish song . . .
Shall speak as Powers for ever to be hallowed!